

## Frequently Asked Questions for Patients/Clients/Residents

Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) respects the privacy of your information. The following is a list of questions that are frequently asked. If you have other questions or concerns, please contact the Privacy Office:

Telephone: (705) 645-4400, ext. 148

E-mail: [privacy@mahc.ca](mailto:privacy@mahc.ca)

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### **What information does the hospital collect?**

The hospital collects both personal and health information. Information like your name, date of birth, address, Health Card Number and extended health insurance numbers are examples of personal information. Information relating to previous health problems, the record of your visits to the hospital and what health care we provide to you during those visits are examples of your health information.

### **Why does the hospital need this information?**

The information we collect from you is used:

- To provide you with quality health care and follow-up care in the community. We need your information to make sure we can make the appropriate diagnosis and provide treatment.
- To carry out quality assurance to help make us better. By reviewing the care we provide to patients, we can determine what strategies are most successful.
- To ask you how we are doing. You may be asked to participate in surveys by either the hospital or by specific programs or departments in the hospital that participated in your care.
- To comply with the law. The law requires hospitals to turn over your personal health information if there is a legal investigation. We also use your information to obtain funding for health services from the Ministry of Health.
- For education to keep existing health care practitioners up-to-date, and to train new health care practitioners for the future. SMMH mentors future health care professionals.

### **How does the hospital protect my information?**

A few of the ways that MAHC strives to protect both your personal information and your personal health information are by:

- Teaching all staff about confidentiality. All staff, physicians, volunteers etc. must sign a confidentiality agreement as a condition of their relationship with the hospital,
- Requiring that all staff wear photo identification at all times while on hospital property to protect against unauthorized individuals accessing information,
- Applying additional security measures to all electronic health records; for example, user names and passwords, firewall and antivirus software,
- Locked doors,

### **Does the hospital share my information with anyone?**

MAHC shares some or all of your information with:

- Health care providers at other hospitals, nursing homes or other health care agencies who become part of your health care team. Information is shared for the purpose of your continuing care in the community,
- Agencies that fund the hospital, for example OHIP, extended health insurance companies, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, Ministry of Health,
- Other agencies as required by law, for example, public health surveillance.

**Do I have to participate in fundraising, research, teaching and surveys?**

- The MAHC Foundations have worked for many years to raise funds for vitally needed equipment and facilities to provide the community with quality health care. Without the generosity of our donors, we would not have these services. Participation in fundraising is not mandatory. You can request that your name be removed from our fundraising contact list at any time by contacting the Privacy Officer @ (705) 645-4400. Ext. 148
- MAHC provides clinical experience for student physicians, nurses and a variety of other health care professionals. The students are constantly under the direction of a licensed practitioner. If you have concerns about the participation of students in your care, please speak to your physician or Clinical Resource Nurse/leader in the area where you are receiving your care.
- Satisfaction Surveys help the hospital by allowing us to get your opinion on the care and services you receive as a patient. Participation in the surveys is not mandatory and you can decline participation and/or request to be removed from the hospital's survey list by contacting the Privacy Officer @ (705) 645-4400. Ext. 148

**Will the hospital disclose my health information to outside companies or to my employer?**

The hospital requires your written permission or a court order to disclose health information to any organization or person not directly involved with the provision of patient care.

**Where is my health information stored and for how long?**

Hospitals are required to keep health records for at least 10 years past the date of the last admission. In some cases, for example health records for children are kept for much longer. Most health records are maintained in the Health Record department, but some departments, such as Rehab, and Laboratories, maintain their own specific records.

**How do I access or request a copy of my health information?**

Ask your health care provider for information about your diagnosis and treatment while you're a patient at SMMH.  
To obtain a copy of, or view your health record, please contact the Privacy Officer at (705) 645-4400, ext. 124.  
You have the right to access your personal health record and MAHC has an obligation to make it available to you with limited exceptions. If releasing your information would put yourself or a third-party at risk, the hospital may choose not to disclose some or all of that information.

**Can my family see my health information?**

Although you have the right to access your health record, this right does not automatically extend to family members and/or friends. If you consent to let a friend or family member see your record, then the friend/family member may access the part(s) that you have provided written consent to let them see.

**What if I am unable to give consent to release my health information?**

If you are unable to give consent for a friend or family member to access your health information due to reasons such as competency or consciousness, the consent decision falls to the appointed substitute decision maker, such as a spouse, parent or guardian.

**Will my family and friends be able to call in to get information about me over the phone?**

When someone calls the hospital, staff has no way to verify who is calling and what their relationship is to you. In order to protect patient privacy, only a minimum amount of information is given out over the phone.

**Can all hospital staff access my health information?**

Only staff involved in your care may access your health information. All MAHC staff is bound by a strict confidentiality policy, which is a condition of employment. This policy seeks to ensure that staff only access information on a need-to-know basis. Health professionals are also bound by confidentiality requirements from their professional Colleges.

**I have noticed that many areas of the hospital are open and I can sometimes overhear staff talking to patients and family about health information. Is this not a breach of patient privacy?**

Despite the pressures of an acute-care hospital setting, staff make every effort to discuss health information confidentially.

**Can my family physician access my health information?**

MAHC releases certain information, for example, inpatient discharge summaries, Emergency Department records, to family physicians to facilitate your continuing care. Other information can be released to your family physician at your request and with your consent.

**What if I have concerns about who has accessed my health information or other Privacy concerns?**

Please contact the Privacy Officer if you have concerns about unauthorized access to your health information or about any other concerns you have about Privacy issues. We will ensure that your concerns are investigated promptly and a response is provided to you in a timely manner.