ORGANIZE YOUR
HEALTH RECORDS

Don't wait until there's a medical emergency to scramble
to collect your history. Here's how to get everything in order.

START WITH WHY
BE YOUR OWN ADVOCATE

Yes, you fill out those medical history forms at doctor's appointments, and the doctor should have a record of tests ordered and results. But say you go to a specialist not in the same health care system as your main provider. Or a walk-in clinic. They probably don't have immediate access to your records. Not to mention doctors are slammed for time. "You need to be the one with an accurate, up-to-date picture of your health," says Lynne Thomas Gordon, CEO of the American Health Information Management Association. That means having all records in one accessible place so you can help the doctor help you at each appointment.

THE BIG PICTURE
BUILD YOUR HEALTH LIBRARY

STEP 1 Ask for copies of your health information; under the HIPAA rule, most doctors, hospitals, and labs must give you the records within 30 days. Specify that you want test results, notes from doctors' exams, and discharge summaries. If you're part of an online patient portal through your doctor, some of this info will be there, but may be limited. Once you have everything, read it to make sure there are no errors or surprises.

STEP 2 Create a three-ring binder for every family member. Or consider the *Your Family Health Organizer* by Jodie Pappas or the *Personal Medical Journal* by Gloria Ann Lopez-Cordle, with template pages to fill in.

NEED TO KNOW
HAVE THIS INFO ON HAND

It's a no-brainer to carry your insurance card at all times, but in case of an emergency, you should have the following info typed on a card tucked into a wallet or tote, which is the first place EMTs will search: a list of allergies, medical conditions (asthma or diabetes, for example), surgeries, blood type, any medications (supplements count), and primary care doctor contact information. For children, add immunization history (including tetanus), height, and weight. Senior citizens also need to indicate how to access their most recent electrocardiogram (so doctors know baseline function).

TECH SUPPORT

For the digitally driven, these apps effectively and easily file medical info and share it with doctors.

HEALTHSPEK
It stores your info, and the Carry Card feature consolidates it on a wallet-friendly medical alert card. Free; *healthspek.com*

HEALTHVAULT
A website or app syncs to health trackers. Microsoft users connect with log-in and password. Free; *healthvault.com*

TRACK MY MEDICAL RECORDS
A basic option to store your info and graph health stats. Free; *www.free healthtrack.com*

EVERNOTE
Scan your medical info, then store it in these virtual notebooks. Basic, free; Plus, $34.99/year; *evernote.com*

MY MEDICAL
Stores records for multiple people; lets you share info electronically with doctors. iOS, $4.99; *mymedicalapp.com* ∎