

Health Card Number

The *Personal Health Information Act (PHIA)* sets out clear rules limiting the collection, use and disclosure of your personal health information. *PHIA* comes into force on June 1, 2013.

Your health card number is your personal health information. Generally, health care providers – known as “custodians” under *PHIA* – may collect or use your health card number for purposes related to providing or administering health care or as otherwise provided for by the *Act*.

What is my health card number?

Your health card number is a unique identification number assigned to you by the Minister of Health and Wellness to allow you to receive insured health care services under the *Health Services and Insurance Act* of Nova Scotia.

Why do organizations ask for it?

Providers delivering health care services that are covered under the *Health Services and Insurance Act* of Nova Scotia, i.e. hospitals, clinics, physicians, require this number in order to receive payment for the services that they provide.

Why is my health card number important?

Your health card number is a link to your personal health information recorded by your health providers. To protect your personal health information it should not be used as identification for purposes other than the provision of health services.

Who can ask me to provide my health card number?

Only custodians under *PHIA* may collect and use your health card number. For example, the staff at a doctor’s office, hospital, walk-in clinic, medical laboratory or pharmacies can ask that you present your health card prior to you receiving care, treatment or services.

When, if at all, can other individuals or organizations, collect or use your health card number?

In addition to custodians, only those organizations or government departments

For your privacy questions
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identified in regulations are permitted to collect and use your health card number.

Under regulation, a non-custodian is allowed to collect and use an individual's health card number for the purposes of facilitating the provision of provincially funded insured health service to the individual. For example, a school, daycare, or camp may *request* that you provide your child's health card number so that they have it on record to use it in the event of an emergency situation.

Who are “custodians” under PHIA who are authorized to collect and use my health card number?

According to *PHIA* the following are authorized to collect and use your health card number:

- a regulated health professional or a person who operates a group practice of regulated health professionals;
- the Minister of Health and Wellness;
- a district health authority under the *Health Authorities Act*;
- the Izaak Walton Killam Health Centre;
- the Review Board under the *Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act*;
- a pharmacy licensed under the *Pharmacy Act*;
- a continuing-care facility licensed by the Minister under the *Homes for Special Care Act* or a continuing-care facility approved by the Minister; and
- Canadian Blood Services.

Who is authorized under regulations to collect and use the health card number?

In addition to those above, the following organizations are authorized to collect and use the health card number:

- the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia for assessing an injured workers' entitlement to benefits;
- the Minister of Community Services for the following purposes:
 - to facilitate health care for children in the Child Welfare or Children in Care program;
 - to indicate eligibility for the pharmacare program established under the *Fair Drug Pricing Act*;
 - to facilitate health care for clients of the Services for Persons with Disabilities program;
 - to determine benefits under the *Employment Support and Income Assistance Act*; and
 - to facilitate the operations of the Child Abuse Register established under the *Children and Family Services Act*;
- the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (Vital Statistics division) for identification of births and deaths; and



- the Office of The Public Trustee for facilitating health care decisions for its clients and for the financial management of its clients' estates.

What should I do when asked for my health card number?

- Ask if you are required by law to provide it.
- Ask why the person needs it, how it will be used and to whom it will be given.

For more information, contact:

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