

Creating a Health Notebook for Your Child

Have you ever gone to see a healthcare provider and realized you couldn't answer all the questions that were important for your child's care? It is very difficult to remember all the dates, treatments, medications that your child has taken. To make the best use of your time with your healthcare provider and to make sure he or she can make the best medical decisions for your child, it is helpful to bring all your child's health history and information with you when you visit health care providers. One great way of having all the information your providers may need is a health notebook, often called a portable, personal medical record or a medical journal. By keeping your own notebook of your child's health history, you can keep track of important details including illnesses, medications, treatments, surgery and other services. Be sure to take your child's health notebook to all of his or her appointments. This will help you give your primary health care provider (PCP) full and up-to-date information about your child's health. At each visit, add any recommendations, changes in medication and test results in the notebook or ask your healthcare provider or his or her staff to help you up-date the notebook. Review the journal from time to time and share it with your child. Be prepared to give it to him or her during adolescence or at an age-appropriate time.

What information should be included in the journal? Your child's medical journal should have information about his or her overall health and mental health. Try to organize the information so you can easily find what you need. Some of the things you should include are:

- **Personal information.** Names and contact information for family members, insurance information, information about other programs that pay for services for your child, list of all your child's health care providers and other people and programs that give your child services, legal issues such as custody and end of life matters.
- **Current Care Plan.** You and your primary healthcare provider should develop and update a plan for your child's care. That should be included in this book. Many of the following pieces of information may be in that care plan. For information about care plans go to: <http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/tools/assess.html>.
- **Assessments and formal reports.** Include copies of individualized education plans (IEPs), individualized family service plans (IFSPs), individualized transitional plans (ITPs), or individualized program plans (IPPs).
- **Health issues or problems.** Include illness or injury, hospitalizations, surgeries, allergies, medications, vitamins or supplements—including complimentary or alternative medicines your child takes and how often they are taken.
- **Changes in function.** Loss of functioning and skills is a critical area to report to your PCP. Has your child started doing something new or stopped doing something he or she used to be able to do?
- **Major developmental milestones.** Include a list of the ages when your child learned to sit, stand, walk, talk, etc (a developmental history). See the American Academy of Pediatrics Child Health topics for age-based milestones (<http://www.aap.org/topics.html>).

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- **Family situation.** Include information about diseases or illnesses in your family, mental health concerns, separation or divorce, births, deaths, etc. that affect your child.
- **Therapy and service records.** Include provider and type of service, and do not leave out complimentary and alternative medicine services (community or spiritual healers, herbalists, etc.) you may access for your child.
- **Equipment and vendors.** List assistive technology or any equipment that your child uses and their vendors.
- **Medical specialist reports.** Highlight any consultations, assessments, treatment plans and follow-up with medical specialists.

It's never too late to start!

It's best to include as much health information as possible. You may need to contact your child's PCP to get information from his or her record to help fill in information from the past. If you can

not access past medical records, record general information in the notebook and start now to collect everything in the future. For more information on starting health notebook, see: http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/tools/care_notebook.html

For additional resources contact the National Center for Cultural Competence:

<http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/nccc/nccc4.html>

American Health and Information Management Association(AHIMA) Health Information Form for Children

http://www.myphr.com/tour/tour_page_11a.asp

Emergency Information Form for Children with Special Health Needs

<http://www.pediatricalliance.com/downloads/emergencyinfospecialneeds.pdf>