

## Steps to Organize your Medical Life

When was the last time you had a tetanus shot? What's your blood pressure? What did your last mammogram reveal? Stumped? You're not alone. Most people don't have their vital health statistics committed to memory, nor do they have records organized or tucked away in a file at home for easy reference. Knowing these stats could literally save your life as well as reduce a lot of added stress.

Gone are the days when your family doctor knew everything important about you and your medical past. Americans now switch primary care doctors more often. They frequently see specialist and that means more places and less professional oversight.

You the patient and not the doctor is responsible for keeping track of one's health information. Maintaining a useful history of your health records and you will be prepared when you change doctors or visit the emergency room or hospital. Your medical background helps doctors make accurate diagnosis and provide the best recommendations about preventive care and treatment.

### Step 1- Organize

- **Create your health history storage system.** A storage system keeps all your records, forms and lab results in one place. You should have something at home, but you can also keep records and files on your computer or an online webservice such as HealthIT.gov. s. Also your health care provider may have an online source as well that handle electronic health records.
- **Records You Need – Doctors.** Make a list of your current doctors' and most recent past doctors' names and contact information.
- **Records You Need – Prescription and over the counter drugs.** Keep a chart and write down any prescription and non-prescription medications, dietary supplements or herbal remedies you are taking. Also list any allergies and reactions you have experienced.
- **Your Health Numbers –** Keep track of lab and/or test results. Take them to your annual exam.

### Step 2 – Prepare

Regular visits can help you and your doctor catch any problems early, perhaps even before you notice symptoms. If caught in time, many conditions can be treated successfully. Your doctor can recommend a routine schedule for exams based on your needs.

Before you go to an appointment prepare for your visit. Make a list of concerns major and minor. Make a list of specific questions that you may have. Put your thoughts on paper and list anything that's been worrying you.

### **Step 3 – Maintain**

One you have done the work in Step 1, by gathering names and numbers of your doctors and your personal health numbers. Now you need to have the discipline to maintain these records.

One of the biggest challenges with our health care is tracking our medical expenses. There are forms that have been created that Extension Specialists that can help you. These forms are for insurance expenses and Medicare.

Source: Purdue Extension