

Under the law in BC you do not have an absolute right to the confidentiality of your personal health information in all situations.

Depending on who has the information, it may be more confidential or less confidential. This is because different health care providers are covered by different laws and have different ethical duties.

The doctor or nurse or other independent health care provider all have a duty of confidentiality to their patients and have to make sure that the personal health information of their patients is kept secure and private. They are only allowed to use it for very limited purposes, mainly for giving you care and treatment, billing and related administrative purposes.

However, there are a few situations where the law says they have to disclose the information.

If those laws don't apply to the situation, they need your [consent](#) to collect, use or disclose your personal health information.

[Different laws apply to the government](#) , and therefore to the Ministry of Health and to Health Authorities and clinics operated by Health Authorities.

They also have to keep the information secure and make sure that it is protected from “ [unauthorized](#) collection, use or [disclosure](#) , but they don't need your consent for what they do, and they can, and do, use it for purposes other than giving you care and treatment or related administrative purposes.

Sometimes they use the information in a form that identifies the person (that is, a name or Personal Health Number or other identifier is attached to the information) and sometimes they take all the identifying information off before they use or disclose it (so it is anonymous).

