

## Talking to adolescent patients about AccessMyHealth

For conversations with adolescents (aged 12 – 18) about their online health information and privacy

### Background:

- Proxy access allows someone to view another person's health record in AccessMyHealth when a patient has given consent, or if a third party is legally authorized to act on a patient's behalf.
- AccessMyHealth may support adolescents in making choices about their health and aims to protect their privacy
- **This is why for residents of B.C. ages 12 – 18, there is no proxy access available in AccessMyHealth (with exception of incapable adolescents) \***. Restricting proxy access protects adolescents from risks when sharing sensitive information (as documented in health research<sup>1</sup>).
- Unlike requesting a paper health record from Health Information Management, AccessMyHealth shows select information online and can be accessed by using a personal device.
- Paper records can still be requested through [Health Information Management](#) by going to [himconnect.ca/patients/request-access-to-your-health-records](https://himconnect.ca/patients/request-access-to-your-health-records)
- For more info about proxy, go to [accessmyhealth.ca/proxy](https://accessmyhealth.ca/proxy)

### Why these conversations matter:

Online access to health information supports adolescents to:

- Have more autonomy over their health-care and well-being
- Improve communication with their health care team
- Build confidence in understanding their health information

Adolescent patients should also be aware of possible risks and limits to confidentiality; some scenarios include:

- Viewing sensitive results (e.g., reproductive health, mental health, or substance use care), especially where adolescents are legally permitted to receive care without parental consent.
- Potential distress from seeing certain notes, diagnoses, or results.
- Possibility of private information being shared with a parent or caregiver inadvertently.

### Limits to confidentiality in health-care:

It's important to explain that confidentiality may need to be broken<sup>2</sup> if:

- There is risk of serious harm to self or others
- It is legally mandated (e.g., child protection, court orders, certain communicable disease disclosures)

### Reminder about exempt specialties:

Some specialties do not distribute documents in AccessMyHealth. These include: Addiction Medicine, Adolescent Medicine, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Child Protection Services Team, Forensic Psychiatry, Pediatric Complex Pain Services, Pediatric Gynecology, Perinatal Addiction Medicine, Psychiatry, Sexual Assault Services

### Sensitive handling of information:

- Health care team members may also withhold sensitive information from the portal if sharing it could be inappropriate or could negatively impact the patient or others. This is outlined in the LearningHub module – [Best Practices in Clinical Documentation](#).
- The **Provider Note – Do Not Send To Portal** note type supports medical staff in documenting sensitive information that should remain confidential. Learn more on [CST Cerner Help](#).

### Resources:

- More information for patients including FAQs is available on [accessmyhealth.ca](https://accessmyhealth.ca)
- Medical staff and health care staff can find additional resources on [CST Cerner Help](#)
- Mature minor consent guidance can be found on [HealthLinkBC](#) and [gov.bc.ca](https://gov.bc.ca)

\*For incapable adolescents, where adults need guardian access to their health record information, proxy access to health record information is available by following the steps here: [accessmyhealth.ca/proxy](https://accessmyhealth.ca/proxy)

<sup>1</sup>Lee, J.A., and C. Holland-Hall. Patient portals for the adolescent and young adult population: Benefits, risks and guidance for use. *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care*, 11 November 2021. DOI: 10.1016/j.cppeds.2021.101101

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Paediatric Society. *Considerations for privacy and confidentiality in adolescent health care service delivery*. 3 March 2023

## Talking to adolescent patients – conversation guide:

Message prompts to support clear, trust-based conversations about AccessMyHealth focused on autonomy, transparency, and choice.

### One-sentence summary:

*“AccessMyHealth is an optional tool you can use to see some of your health information — you’re in control of whether you use it, who sees it, and we’re here to help you decide what’s right for you.”*

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### Start with autonomy and choice

- *“In B.C., people your age can make decisions about their health care and who sees their information.”\**
- *“Using AccessMyHealth is your choice — it’s okay to use it or not.”*

\*You may wish to refer to HealthLinkBC guidance on [mature minor consent](#) or [gov.bc.ca information](#)

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### What the portal is (and isn’t)

- *“AccessMyHealth lets you see some health information online, like test results, x-rays, upcoming appointments, and sometimes notes from the health care team member.”*
  - *“Not everything shows up online, and it doesn’t replace talking with your health care team.”*
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### Privacy & real-world safety

- *“The portal is private, and your health care team helps to keep your information safe.”*
  - *“If you share devices, don’t have a safe space, or worry someone else could see your information, let’s talk first.”*
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### Proxy access (no jargon)

- *“For people aged 12–18, parents or caregivers can’t see your health information online unless you show them, or unless there’s a legal reason.”*
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### Prepare youth for sensitive or confusing information

- *“Some results or notes can feel confusing or upsetting when you see them on your own.”*
  - *“You don’t have to figure things out alone — you can bring questions to your next visit, ask your health care team member or a trusted adult in your life.”*
  - *“You can also talk to a nurse by calling 8-1-1. There’s also the Helpline for Children: 310-1234. In an emergency, always call 9-1-1.”*
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## Be clear about limits to confidentiality

- *“Most of what you share with us is private.”*
  - *“There are a few situations where we must share information — like serious safety or health concerns, or court orders (legal requests).”*
  - *“If that ever happens, we’ll talk with you about it.”*
  - *“This may not be information that you can see in the portal, but we may have to share it with other health-care team members or an adult in your life”*
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## Explain why some information may not appear

- *“Some services or notes don’t show up online because they’re especially confidential or could put someone at risk of harm if shared.”*
  - *“If something isn’t in the portal, and you’re wondering why, you can ask your health care team member or send an email to the support team.”*
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## Close with consent and questions

- *“Does using the portal feel right for you right now?”*
- *“What questions do you have?”*