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Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Medical Records Shouldn't Be Skipped

Keeping accurate personal medical records can be a daunting task. Doctors, Pharmacists, Urgent Care Clinics, Hospitals and Insurance companies all produce paperwork as part of their client care. The paperwork goes home with the patient, but then where does it reside once it gets home? Stuffed in a manila envelope? Shoved in an overfull file folder marked "medical?" Maintaining personal medical records in an orderly fashion can provide preparedness, health and perhaps even tax benefits. The good news is it can be done in a simple, low cost way.

THREE RINGS TO ORGANIZATION

In this day and age of electronic data transfer, we are all accustomed to information traveling fast when we need it. But this is not always the case with medical records. Medical record transfers require authorization and may not be available electronically from every facility. What will happen if you have a medical emergency in your home at 3:00 am on a Sunday morning? Without available records on medications currently taken or individual allergies it is difficult for first responders to properly care for a patient.



Medical records can easily be stored the "old school" way. Three ring binders (notebooks) make a great storage medium. Each person in the home should have their information stored in an individual notebook to provide for adequate storage space and to prevent any confusion. The first portion of the notebook should include a summary of the following information divided into subsections:

- ◆ **Current medications** - Include the names/dosages and pharmacy contact info.
- ◆ **Immunizations** - Children and even young adults starting college have to have up to date shots. Adults should also keep tetanus shot records in this section.
- ◆ **Allergies** - include all information on seasonal or drug allergies
- ◆ **Medical History** - Provide a synopsis of previous procedures and surgeries,

Standard tabbed notebook dividers work very well for separating and identifying the sections of your medical records notebook. Following the initial medical summary portion of the book, separate sections with the actual paperwork issued by the medical providers and or insurance companies will follow. Here are some suggested categories to use:



- ◆ **Doctor's/Hospital Visits**
- ◆ **Tests/Test results**
- ◆ **Prescription Information** - Include the product detail pages provided by the Pharmacist of both current and past prescriptions along with the reason it is/was being taken.
- ◆ **Billing and Insurance Papers** - Take the insurance papers received and match them with the correct bill. Mark them as paid or pending. Compare the bills against office visits to protect against billing errors.

Keep the paperwork in chronological order, either ascending or descending, whichever is easiest for you to use. You will need to three hole punch the paperwork to make it ready for storage in the notebook. Either staple or paperclip billing and insurance papers together once you have matched them up.

It is important that more than one person knows where the notebooks are stored, just in case the individual needing care is unable to direct someone or personally retrieve them. Organizing your records gives you control over the information when you need it, whether it's for an emergency or just to file your taxes.

