

Your Data Matters to the NHS

Information about your health and care helps us to improve your individual care, speed up diagnosis, plan your local services and research new treatments.

In May 2018, the strict rules about how this data can and cannot be used were strengthened. The NHS is committed to keeping patient information safe and always being clear about how it is used. You can choose whether your confidential patient information is used for research and planning. To find out more visit: nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters

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How your data is used

Your health and care information is used to improve your individual care. It is also used to help us research new treatments, decide where to put GP clinics and plan for the number of doctors and nurses in your local hospital. Wherever possible we try to use data that does not identify you, but sometimes it is necessary to use your confidential patient information.

What is confidential patient information?

Confidential patient information identifies you and says something about your health, care or treatment. You would expect this information to be kept private. Information that only identifies you, like your name and address, is not considered confidential patient information and may still be used: for example, to contact you if your GP practice is merging with another.

Who can use your confidential patient information for research and planning?

It is used by the NHS, local authorities, university and hospital researchers, medical colleges and pharmaceutical companies researching new treatments.

Making your data opt-out choice

You can choose to opt out of sharing your confidential patient information for research and planning. There may still be times when your confidential patient information is used: for example, during an epidemic where there might be a risk to you or to other people's health. You can also still consent to take part in a specific research project.

Will choosing this opt-out affect your care and treatment?

No, your confidential patient information will still be used for your individual care. Choosing to opt out will not affect your care and treatment. You will still be invited for screening services, such as screenings for bowel cancer.

What should you do next?

You do not need to do anything if you are happy about how your confidential patient information is used. If you do not want your confidential patient information to be used for research and planning, you can choose to opt out securely online or through a telephone service.

You can change your choice at any time.

To find out more or to make your choice visit nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters or call **0300 303 5678**.

To set a National Data Opt-Out

Following recommendations made by the National Data Guardian for health and care in England a new national data opt-out is available. It provides a secure and accessible way for the public to opt out of their confidential patient information being used for reasons other than their individual care and treatment subject to a number of exemptions.

The national data opt-out is a simple option that a patient who wishes to opt out needs to set only once, and which will then be applied across the health and care system.

How to set a national data opt-out choice using the online service

Before using the online service, patients who wish to set a national data opt-out will need to have the following information to hand, so that their identity can be confirmed:

- **NHS number** – patients can find their NHS number on a letter from their GP practice or other NHS service, on a prescription, or via online access to GP practice services (such as for booking appointments or requesting repeat prescriptions)
- **Mobile phone number or email address provided previously at a GP practice or other NHS service.**

Using any device which can connect to the internet such as a computer, tablet, or mobile phone, patients can go to: www.nhs.uk/your-nhs-data-matters and follow the guidance on the page.

The online service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

How to set a national data opt-out choice using the telephone service

If a patient is unable to use the online service, or would prefer not to, they can telephone 0300 303 5678 to register a national data opt-out.

According to Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator, calls to 0300 numbers should cost no more than calls to a normal personal or business geographic landline number (numbers starting with 01 or 02), whether calling from a landline, or mobile phone.

The telephone service is available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, excluding English bank/ public holidays.

Confirmation

Once the process has been completed, the patient will receive a confirmation that their national data opt out choice has been set, using email, SMS text, or letter as per their chosen communication method.