



Know Your Medical History



CHALLENGE

Get info
to manage
your health

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Know Your Medical History."
2. Create a plan to get to know your medical history.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



The young John Bellairs from Marshall, Michigan, wasn't the athletic type. He got sick more often than some kids. He was shy. He preferred books and ice cream to baseball and football. He spent a lot of time at home thinking and reading. And he often worried about money and mysterious things.

For Bellairs, it was just the kind of childhood that inspired him to become a writer. He published his first novel by the time he was 28 years old. He wrote stories about spooky houses, wizards, magic, ghosts, and fictional teens a little braver and stronger than he was as a kid.

He won a long list of literary awards for novels like *The Mummy, the Will, and the Crypt* and *The House with a Clock In Its Walls*. He published 31 books during his career and gained a massive following of fans.

And then at age 53, it was over. Bellairs died of heart disease. Diet, exercise and lifestyle habits played a part. But he also had a long family history of heart disease.

What's your story? Do you know your medical history? What about your parents, siblings and other relatives? Their medical history matters, too. If you want to prevent disease, be healthier and live longer, take the month long health challenge: *Know Your Medical History: Get info to manage your health.*¹

Medical history matters: How much do you know?

Take the quiz to find out.

1. A healthcare provider must grant you access to your personal medical records.
2. Not all personal health data stored in digital devices (phones, watches, tablets, etc.) is protected.
3. Health officials recommend collecting two generations of medical history for blood relatives.
4. Your relatives' health history can help your doctor determine your risk for certain diseases or health conditions.
5. Your personal medical history can help your healthcare team recommend diet, exercise, lifestyle choices, and medications to prevent or manage disease.

Check your answers. How did you do? If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, take a minute to learn more about your medical history. The National Institutes of Health recommends collecting three generations of medical records for blood relatives.⁴ Why? If you have a family history of a chronic disease, your risk is often greater. Your personal and family medical history can help you make choices to prevent disease, be healthier, and live longer.

Answers: 1. True. 2. True. 3. True. 4. False. 5. True.

Do you know your medical history?

Every time you visit a new doctor, it might feel like you have to tell your life history in medical moments. For example:

- Have you had any surgeries? When?
- Are you taking any medications? List all that apply.
- What are you allergic to? List all known allergies.
- Have you been vaccinated for measles, shingles, lockjaw (tetanus), or other diseases? When?
- Have you experienced recent weight loss or weight gain? When?
- Do you have a family medical history of (fill in the blank)? Please describe.

It's not uncommon for this to be a big list of questions. And if you're like most people, you may not have all the answers. Or maybe you know where to find the medical info you need, but it's scattered in a variety of locations in digital and print form.

Sound familiar? Now is always a good to begin organizing your medical history.

5 Ways to Know Your Medical History

Wondering where to start? Here are some easy ways to get to know your medical history, get organized, prevent disease, and stay healthy.

1. Keep your medical records in one place

Anatomy of an electronic health record
tinyurl.com/y2v39g6e

Prefer old-school paper format? Get a notebook or binder to create a paper trail of your medical history. Whenever you get a bill, diagnosis, test results, or explanation of benefits, add it to your binder. It's a good place to keep a copy of your health insurance card, too.

If you, prefer digital, scan or take a picture of these documents and save them on your computer. Bring this with you when you go to a doctor's appointment.

2. Compile healthcare contact info

Digital tools to help you manage health information
tinyurl.com/y2pnpw33

Do you know how to contact your doctor, dentist, chiropractor, or other healthcare professional? Compile all the contact information for your healthcare providers in one place. Name, address, phone number, email address. You may even include a note for each record about your last visit. Keep it in your notebook or digital file.

3. Request your records

Maybe you moved away, changed doctors, or haven't been to see a doctor in a long time. You can still get your records. Federal law gives you the right to obtain your medical records from virtually any organization or business that provides healthcare services. Just ask.

4. Use digital tools

Some healthcare organizations use online patient portals that allow you to access your medical records. Your employer may also provide a wellness portal or platform that contains your health information. And there's a growing number of mobile apps that allow you to store and organize your medical history. Use these digital tools to manage your health, share information with your doctor, and track your medical history.²



5. Talk to your family members

Your personal health history provides useful information to monitor your health. But it's not the whole story. If you have a family history of certain health conditions, your risk rises. Common diseases that run in families include:³

- ✓ Heart disease
- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ Asthma
- ✓ Diabetes
- ✓ Breast cancer Lung cancer
- ✓ Prostate cancer

Video: Take charge of your medical data
tinyurl.com/yxr3zqmh

How do you learn the health history of your family members?

The easiest way: just ask. Set aside some time to talk about it. Keep notes, and add the information to your binder or digital file. When you know your medical history, you've got information that can help you prevent disease, manage health conditions, feel better, and live longer.

References

1. Kruse, S.C., et al. (2018). The use of electronic health records to support population health: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Medical Systems*, 42(11): 214. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y6xr72bs>
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3. National Center for Biotechnology Information. (2006). A guide to genetics and health. *Genetic Alliance*. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y2sbml3q>
4. National Institutes of Health. Why is it important to know my family medical history? U.S. National Library of Medicine. From: <https://tinyurl.com/y98hdkum>
5. Graphic adapted from: <https://www.healthit.gov/infographic/electronic-health-records-infographic>



Know Your Medical History

CHALLENGE

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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Create a plan to get to know your medical history.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and learn more about your medical history.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you take action to know your medical history. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____		
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_____ Number of days this month I took action to learn about my medical history

_____ Number of days this month I was physically active for at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____