

Doctor's Notes:

Patient Frequently Asked Questions

What are doctor's notes?

Your doctor takes notes during and after your appointment or hospital stay to keep track and document a variety of health-related issues. With doctor's notes (via MyCarolinas) you can access these notes online to gain a better understanding of your health and medical condition.

What is a note?

When you see a doctor for an appointment or hospital stay, you may notice him or her taking notes during the visit. After the visit (or a discussion with you), the doctor composes a note summarizing the most important information. This becomes a part of your medical record. You can read these notes via your MyCarolinas account.

The note may contain:

- A summary of what you told the doctor, also called the "history" or "history of present illness."
- The findings from a physical exam, such as your blood pressure or how your lungs sound.
- Lab, radiology or other results that help the doctor assess your condition.
- The doctor's assessment or diagnosis of any medical conditions or symptoms – also called "assessment" or "impressions."
- The treatment plan the doctor recommends.
- Next steps, such as additional tests, studies, follow-up appointments or referrals to a specialist.

How can I get the most out of my notes?

- When your note is available after your visit, read it to review what you discussed with your doctor, your treatment plan, any changes to your medications, and any follow-up tests or appointments you need to schedule or attend.
- If there are terms you don't understand, look them up, or ask your practice for reliable websites or other resources to learn more about your medical conditions.
- Between visits you can review your treatment plan to make sure you follow up on procedures, tests or appointments.
- You may choose to share notes with your family members or others involved in your care and discuss how you are going to work together to carry out your plans.

- In preparation for your next visit, review your notes to remember what you discussed with your healthcare provider at your last appointment. Think about any steps you have taken since your last visit and any changes or new problems you may be experiencing since then. Then prepare a list of questions to review with your doctor at the appointment.

What are the benefits of reading notes?

Patients who read their notes report benefits such as:

- A better understanding of their health and medical conditions.
- Improved recall of their care plan.
- Feeling more in control of their care.
- Finding it easier to take medications as prescribed.

I can't see any of my notes or a specific note I expected to see. Why?

Possible reasons include:

- Notes written prior to September 1, 2015 are not visible in MyCarolinas.
- The note may not be ready. After the doctor writes and approves the note electronically, the note will be available.
- Your doctor may have chosen not to share this particular note due to sensitive, confidential information. If you have questions, we encourage you to talk with your doctor or your doctor's office to make sure you understand his or her reasons for not making your note available.
- At this time, behavioral health, psychotherapy, chemical dependency, forensic, child advocacy, progress and consultation notes will not be viewable in MyCarolinas.
- Remember, you still have complete access to your entire health record by contacting Carolinas HealthCare System's Health Information Management Department.

If you have further questions, please contact your doctor or doctor's office.

What if I have questions about information in the note?

Please keep in mind that the note is part of your medical record. Doctors and other clinicians use the note to manage your individual circumstances and to communicate efficiently with others involved in your care. You may find the note difficult to read because it includes unfamiliar abbreviations or terms. Here is a list of common abbreviations to help you better understand medical terms or diagnoses (<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/appendixb.html>).

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How can I send a message to my doctor?

- Log in to MyCarolinas and send your physician a secure message by choosing Health Messages. You can ask questions there.
- Do NOT use regular e-mail to communicate with your doctor about concerns that need immediate attention. If you have a medical emergency, please call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. If you have an urgent question or concern, call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency room.

I'm concerned about privacy. Who else has access to my notes? Can my clinician share this record with others without telling me?

There is no change regarding who has access to your notes. Those involved in your care already have access to this information. Doctors operate under strict confidentiality rules. To help support your privacy, please keep in mind:

- Always keep your MyCarolinas login name and password private.
- Wherever you look at your account, always exit by selecting "Sign out" when you are done.

How can I send general suggestions or thoughts about doctor's notes? Whom should I contact?

If you have a specific comment about your own notes, please contact your doctor by sending a secure message through MyCarolinas.

If you would like to read notes from visits or discussions that are not viewable in MyCarolinas, you can request your medical records (<http://www.carolinashealthcare.org/medical-records>).

Will children have access doctor's notes?

Parents of children 12 years old or younger will have access to their children's notes if they are enrolled in MyCarolinas by a parent/guardian. MyCarolinas is not available for children between the ages of 13 to 17 years old. Protections around privacy matters requires Carolinas HealthCare System to limit access. Parents would have to contact their doctor's office to discuss their child's medical situation.

How do I get started?

Log in to your MyCarolinas account, or create one if you have not already. Then select Health Record from the top navigation bar. Your notes will be available from the navigation on the left called "My doctor's notes."

On the side bar, you can also access your health summary, lab and test results, patient education materials, prescriptions, list of procedures performed, visit summaries and radiology reports.

When will I be able to read my notes?

Doctor's notes will be available to patients on September 1, 2015. Only notes written on September 1, 2015 and after are accessible to patients.

- Radiology reports will not be viewable in MyCarolinas until seven days after they are complete to allow time for the doctor to review.



Carolinan HealthCare System