



Sharing Sensitive Health Information: Protect Your Privacy and Improve Your Health

Background:

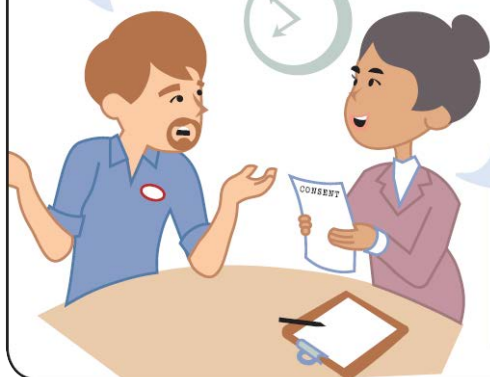
James is 42 years old and in counseling for substance use disorder (SUD). One day, he hurt his back moving furniture in his apartment. Although he is in a lot of pain, he is worried that treatment for his back may cause him to slip in his recovery. James decides to talk to his therapist about his concerns.

I hurt my back last week and have to see an orthopedist. I'm worried about what I'll do if they prescribe pain medication.



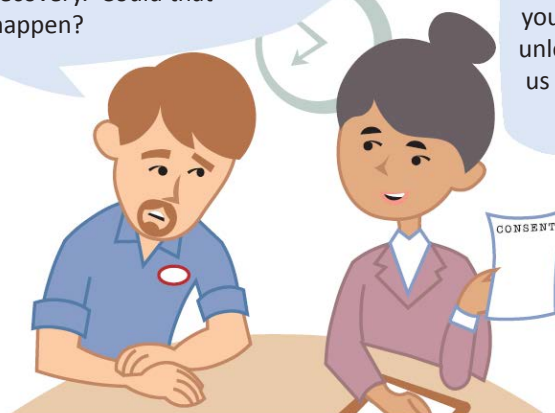
You should talk to your orthopedist about your recovery. We can also share your medical records, including your recovery plan. However federal regulation requires that we have your written consent before we can send anything to your orthopedist related to your treatment.

I'm not sure, what would I have to do?



All you need to do is fill out this form. It asks a few things: who you want to share your information with, what information you want to share, and why.

I get health insurance through my job and I don't want anyone at work knowing that I'm in recovery. Could that happen?

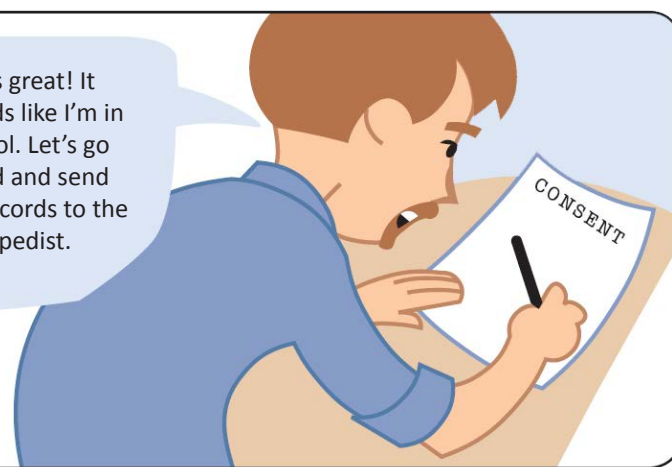


We can't share your treatment records with your employer unless you give us permission to do so.

You can also say when you want this form to expire. If you change your mind or feel uncomfortable sharing this information, you can withdraw permission at any time.



That's great! It sounds like I'm in control. Let's go ahead and send my records to the orthopedist.



A few days later...

I hurt my back the other week and I'm still in pain. Do you have any open appointments to see Dr. Smith?



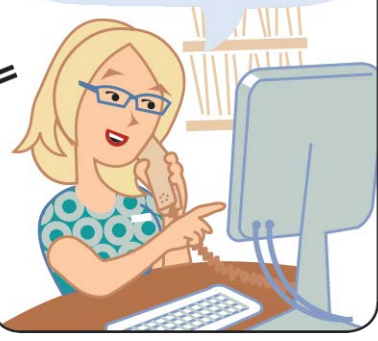
Thanks for calling; Dr. Smith can see you on Tuesday at 10 am.



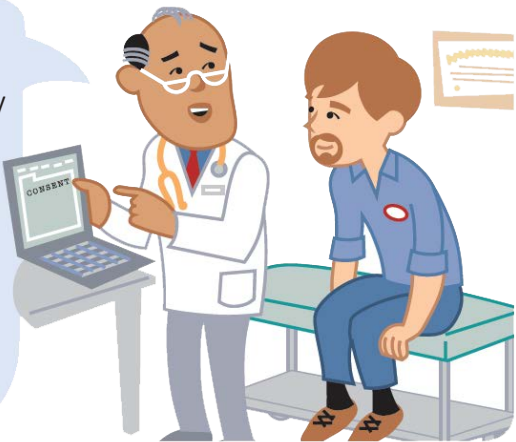
Thank you. My therapist told me she was going to send you my medical records?



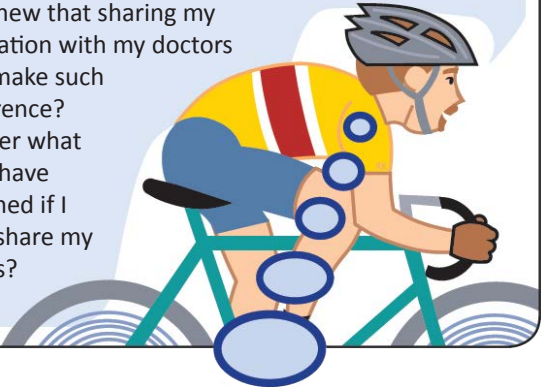
Yes, it looks like we've already received them from your therapist's office. We will review them before your appointment.



Thank you for sharing your records with me. Based on your recovery plan, I'm going to prescribe a non-opioid that should give you pain relief but not interfere with your recovery. I'm also going to refer you to a physical therapist.



Wow – feeling much better. Less pain and no worries about slipping with my recovery. Who knew that sharing my information with my doctors could make such a difference? I wonder what would have happened if I didn't share my records?



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What if James had not shared his medical records?

I'm going to prescribe something to help manage your pain.



Oxycodone. I shouldn't take this. But I can't continue with this pain either. Ugh.... Maybe taking something for just a couple days won't hurt me, I can control it...



You should always talk to your medical providers about problems with substance use. Sharing your medical information may help your care team to make more informed decisions about your care. Talk to your doctor or visit <https://www.healthit.gov/patients-families> to learn more.