

What exactly are my shared notes?

After a visit or discussion with your provider, they write a note that reflects the visit, summarizing the most important information. The note becomes a part of your medical record and may contain:

- A summary of what you told the doctor or nurse, also called a history
- Findings from an exam, such as your blood pressure, weight, or how your lungs sounded
 - lab, radiology, pathology, or other test results
- Your provider's assessment or diagnosis of any medical conditions or symptoms, also called assessment or impressions
- The treatment plan recommended by your doctor and discussed with you, and
- Next steps, including upcoming tests, follow-up appointments, or referrals.

When can I see a note from my visit?

You will be able to find your notes in MyChart when your provider completes them.

How do I find my notes?

1. Log in to [MyChart](#), click on the 'Visits'
2. Select your preferred visit
3. Click on "View Notes" (*you will only see notes for visits starting after March 30, 2021*).

Why is this the note-sharing policy changing?

Sharing notes has been brought on by the Cures Act. On April 5, 2021, the [ONC Cures Act Final Rule](#) will go into effect. However, Southcoast Health is enabling this feature on March 30. The Final Rule puts into practice the communication requirements outlined in the 21st Century Cures Act, a federal law designed to support patients' control of their health care by providing them with greater access to their health records. The law applies to both inpatient and outpatient services.

Sharing notes and test results help patients to read material that, through the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), is already theirs to review and receive if they so desire.

What are the benefits of reading your notes?

Patients who read their notes report that they:

- Have a better understanding of their health and medical conditions
- Have a better ability to recall and follow their care plan
- Feel more in control of their health
- Take better care of themselves
- Do a better job taking their medications as prescribed
- Can identify inaccuracies in the record and play a role in the safety of care

- Feel comfortable sharing notes with care partners and others involved in their care
- Communicate more clearly, helping to strengthen the partnership between themselves and their health care team

How can I get the most out of my shared MyChart notes?

- Read your notes after a visit to carefully review what was discussed, including the care plan, medication instructions, and recommendations for follow-up appointments or referrals.
- If you don't understand specific test results or terms, await clarification from your provider or ask them for reliable websites or other resources to learn more about your medical conditions.
- Review your note to make sure the information is accurate and up to date. Let your provider know about any changes that should be made to ensure your care's safety.
- Read notes between visits to remind yourself of the treatment plan and remember upcoming procedures, tests, or appointments.
- Use the note to make a "to-do" list for yourself and take it to a visit with your provider.
- You may decide to share your note with family, informal caregivers, or others involved in your health. Sharing is a great way to help manage care and make sure your entire care team is on the same page.
- Before your next visit, read your note to remind yourself about your last conversation with your provider and prepare for the visit.
- Think about the things you've done since you last saw your provider and the questions you'd like to ask.
- When you read the note, it may trigger questions or remind you of additional information potentially important for your care.
- Try to take the appropriate action. Some concerns can wait for the next visit, but others are best addressed quickly.

What if I'm worried about what I might read or don't want to read a particular note or test result?

Note reading may not be suitable for everyone.

- Just knowing that the notes are available if they ever want to read them or share them with a care partner is enough for some patients.
- Talk with your provider or care team about the benefits and side effects of reading notes/test results to determine if it's right for you.
- It may be a good idea to start by reviewing a note with your provider if you're nervous.
- You don't need to read every note, but referring back to them, even occasionally, to remember what was discussed can help you feel more in control of your health care.

What can I do if my provider doesn't share notes and test results?

You have a legal right to receive and review all your medical records, including the notes. If the notes are not yet available online, or your provider doesn't use the MyChart patient portal, you can always request a paper copy of your notes. You may also want to communicate with your health care team and let them that you're interested in accessing your notes online.

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

Possible reasons include:

- The note may have been written before the requirement of shared started notes was enacted by federal law.
- The note may not be ready. After the note is written and approved electronically, it will become available.
- Your note is considered a psychotherapy note regarding behavioral health. In this instance, we suggest speaking directly with your provider on ways to obtain these medical records.

What if I have questions about the information in my note?

Because your note is part of your larger medical record, it may contain medical language, abbreviations, or terminology that is not easy to understand. View the [list of common abbreviations](#) to help you with medical terms or diagnoses. If you have questions about your note, write them down so you can email them to your provider or share them at your next appointment.

What should I do if I think I may have found an error in my note?

If it's a serious issue, like a potential mistake that could affect your care immediately, contact the provider who wrote the note and tell them about your concern.

For other inaccuracies, be sure to write down the correction and bring it to your provider's attention so your records can be updated. Use your best judgment about small mistakes, such as spelling or grammar. Providers often dictate their notes and rely on others to type them. If these less immediate issues feel important, bring them up at your next visit.

How do shared notes affect confidentiality and privacy?

It is important to note that shared notes do not change the confidential relationship you have with your health care team. Only you and the care team directly involved in your care can access your note. What does change is your ability to share. With shared notes, it's easier to share your medical information with a care partner, family member, or others, but only if you choose. You are in complete control of who has access to your note, which means you are in full control of your privacy. To help ensure your privacy, please remember to keep your login name and password private and wherever you look at your account, always exit by selecting "sign out" when you are done.