



Turning 18: What it Means for Your Health

Turning 18 may not make you feel any different, but legally, this means you are an adult.

What does this mean?

- After you turn 18, your doctor talks to **you**, not your parents, about your health.
- Your health information and medical records are private (or confidential) and can't be shared unless you give the OK.
- It is up to you to make decisions for your own health care, although you can always ask others for help.

Things to know

- The confidentiality between you and your doctor is legally known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accessibility Act, or HIPAA.
- This law gives privacy rights to minors (people who are under age 18) for reproductive and sexual health, mental health, and substance abuse services. Check your state's minor consent laws for more information.

What needs to be done?

- If you want to share medical information with others, your doctor will ask you to fill out a form that allows them to see your medical record and be with you during your visit.
- If you need help making decisions, talk to your family, your support team, and your doctor about who needs to be involved and what you need to do to make sure they can be a part of the conversations.

Additional resources

- If you want extra support managing your health or making decisions, the [National Resource Center for Supported Decision-Making](#) has information to connect you with resources in your state.
- [The Adolescent Health Initiative](#) has information about privacy rights for teens in different states.

*Important note: The following states have a different legal age of adulthood, also known as age of majority. Alabama and Nebraska are 19, Mississippi and Puerto Rico are 21.