3 Principles of a Personal Medical File

Having accurate personal health information helps providers make lifesaving decisions. Here are some ideas to find it quickly in an emergency.

Follow these three steps to help you find your medical information faster:

1. Gather.
2. Organize.
3. Update.

You'll be ready with critical medical and insurance information should you or family members need it in a hurry. Smead recommends using an Expanding File with Antimicrobial Product Protection to keep health records.

Gather

- Create a separate medical file for each family member. The file should include a medical history, current medications, health status, and any information that would be important for health care professionals to know.
- Use an Expanding File with Antimicrobial Product Protection as the medical file. The 12 pockets have plenty of room for existing and future records.
- Contact all doctors and health care providers at each facility where you or a family member has received treatment. Ask for current and past information. Complete any authorization forms needed to release the information.
- Collect health insurance information to include in the file. Make sure you have policy numbers, group plan numbers, coverage and copay information.

Organize

- Label each expanding file with the person's name on the outside protective flap.
- Sort the medical information into groups, such as Health History, Prescriptions, Insurance, etc. Use the individual

pockets to keep the groups separated. Write the category headings on the tabs.
- Place the most current pages in front. Include a summary page as the first page of each section.
- Keep the most important information in the front pocket of the file; status of your current condition, provider contact information, medications and treatments, recent tests or procedures, insurance data. Label the tab “Emergency Information”.

Update

- When you visit a doctor, clinic or hospital, add any new information to the file. Update medications lists or health histories to keep all information current.
- Keep track of changes as they occur. Write down what your doctor tells you at each appointment and keep it in the file.
- Store the medical files in a safe but easily accessible place. Take the file with you in an emergency. Bring it with you when you travel and to your scheduled appointments.