

# **EMPOWERED PATIENT<sup>®</sup>**

## *“Ten Things Patients Should Know” Series*

### **HEALTH PRIVACY TIPS**

1. **TALK TO YOUR PROVIDERS.** Voice any concerns and ask what measures they have in place to safeguard your private information. You should be given a copy of their privacy policy.
2. **UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS UNDER FEDERAL HIPAA LAWS.** Take the time to request your medical records to see what information they contain.
3. **READ EVERY LINE** of any information release or consent form. You may not want to authorize your information to be used for marketing products or new medications.
4. **BE SURE THERE IS AN END DATE FOR THE RELEASE.** When signing any authorizations for the release of records look for an "end date." Do not sign an open-ended release that does not specify a time frame.
5. **KEEP A PERSONAL HEALTH RECORD:** If your record is ever unavailable or lost, you will still have your own account and timeline of your medical treatment.
6. **SPECIFY HOW YOU WANT INFORMATION COMMUNICATED** to you and to others. If you would rather be contacted on your cell phone or by email, make these preferences known.
7. **BE CAREFUL OF FAX COMMUNICATIONS:** Fax machines may be accessible to many people and your information may not be kept private. If you prefer that offices avoid faxes, ask them to use postal mail or email.
8. **LET YOUR PROVIDER KNOW IF YOUR PRIVACY HAS BEEN BREACHED:** Any official complaints about privacy violations can be made to the Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/hipaa/complaints/index/html>
9. **CONSIDER USING A SCREEN NAME** in place of your real name for online chat rooms, message boards and other forums to maintain your privacy.
10. **READ THE PRIVACY POLICY** of every health website you visit before you register or post any personal health information. Know what safeguards are in place to ensure your privacy.