

Test Results, Open Notes and the Cures Act

This handout explains why important information, like test results and medical notes, are likely to appear in your MyChart account before your provider has had a chance to discuss it with you. Read below to learn about the Cures Act, which requires automatic release of information, and what to do when you have questions about the information you receive in MyChart.

The 21st Century Cures Act

The 21st Century Cures Act is a federal law that was passed in 2016. The final rule of the Act, which went into effect earlier this year, requires healthcare providers to release test results into patients' electronic health records, such as MyChart, immediately. It also requires patient access to what are called "open notes." This means that you can now see the notes providers write in your electronic health record.

Test results

In line with the Cures Act, nearly all test results will appear in MyChart immediately. If you do not want a test result automatically released to your MyChart account, during your visit with your provider, ask them to "delay release of the result" for seven days, which gives your care team enough time to contact you.

Open notes

Providers write notes in MyChart so that everyone on your care team has the same information. This is the main way that providers communicate with each other. Because of this, the notes may include medical terms that are new to you. The following websites may help you identify definitions of unfamiliar terms and abbreviations.

- Medical Dictionary – Common abbreviations: <https://medlineplus.gov/appendixb.html>
- Medline Plus: <https://medlineplus.gov/healthtopics.html>

Our goal is to always discuss any potentially confusing or unsettling information in MyChart at your next scheduled visit. If you have questions about the information you read that cannot wait until then, please contact your care team to schedule a conversation with your provider. If you need emotional support, please contact SCCA's Social Work team at (206) 606-1076 or Spiritual Health at (206) 606-1099.

Questions and answers

When will my provider explain my test results or notes about my care?

Most often, your provider will explain your test results or notes at your next scheduled visit. Your care team will contact you if the results require an immediate change in your care. Unless you have urgent concerns about a test result, please wait a few days before contacting your provider's office to allow your care team to review the results and determine if a change in care is needed.

What if I don't want my test results or provider notes to appear in MyChart? Can I turn off that feature?

Your provider can delay the release of results each time a test is ordered and can delay the release of notes for each appointment. They do not have an option to permanently mark "delay all tests and/or notes" in the electronic health record. If you do not want tests or notes released immediately, please tell your provider each time you visit.

Can I change MyChart notifications, so I don't get an email when test results are posted in my account?

Yes. To do this, go to the MyChart home page and click "Menu" in the top left corner. A menu list will appear on the left side of your screen. Scroll down to the "Account Settings" section at the bottom. Select "Communication Preferences". Notification settings are shown with email, text message, phone call, and mail icons. If the notification setting is active, the icon for your chosen option will be dark purple. If a notification setting is not active, the same icon will be white. To change your push notification settings for test results, click the drop-down menu for "Health" and click on the icon for how you would like to know that your results are ready. If you do not want to receive any notifications that your test results are available, click the icon(s) so that it turns white. Be sure to save your changes when you are done making your selections.

Who can I talk to if I would like emotional support about a test result or note that I read in MyChart?

Our social workers are available weekdays to provide emotional, psychological and practical support to you, your family and caregivers. They can also refer you to our psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as identify other SCCA and community resources. To reach Social Work, call (206) 606-1076.

Our Spiritual Health team provides respectful spiritual and emotional care for people of all faiths, including those who are not religious or spiritual. Our trained staff work with you and your loved ones as you face unknowns, losses and struggles. They can guide you as you search, grow, cope and heal. To reach Spiritual Health, call (206) 606-1099.