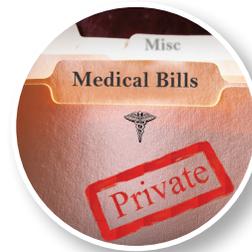


Protect yourself from medical identity fraud



It's America's fastest growing identity crime. DHHS says health care data hacking has affected more than 34 million Americans. Stolen records provide information for tax and insurance fraud.

"When someone steals your medical identity, they corrupt your individual health record, so the next time you receive care your doctor can be working off a file riddled with bad information," say ID Experts, a medical software provider.

Use these wise fraud protection tips.

- Protect your health insurance card as carefully as you would your Social Security or credit cards. Theft of these cards allows someone to assume your identity to receive care. Treat their loss as seriously as a missing credit card; notify your insurance company and include it on any police report you file.
- Never share your insurance with a friend or family member. When someone pretends to be you to receive health care, your lifetime medical records become compromised. This can lead to a future misdiagnosis, a prescription mistake, or other inappropriate treatment.
- Use strong passwords on patient portals and change them often.
- Be observant in medical offices. Don't just fill out the HIPAA policy form and then assume your provider is being careful. Raise concerns, like medical records sitting open on desks or unattended and unlocked computer terminals.
- Do NOT provide your medical information to someone who calls or emails you about your "possible involvement in a recent breach."