

Personal Medical Records and FAQ about Patient Portals

Various laws (state and federal) allow patients to have access to their medical records. This can be by reviewing the record, getting a copy of the record or receiving a summary of care.

If you want to get a copy of your medical records, you need to contact your medical provider(s). You will need to complete and sign an authorization for release of this information. If you are asking for your records to be sent to another doctor, there is usually no charge. Otherwise there is often a fee to scan or make copies of your file.

HIPAA Access

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) gives people the right to see and get copies of their health information.

You can review this informative government website: [The Guide to Getting and Using Your Health Records](#) in order to help your learner. It covers:

- Learning you have the right to your health record
- What is in your health record
- How to get your health record
- Check what is in your record once you receive it to make sure everything is complete, correct and up-to-date.
- How to use your health record so you can understand, advocate for and manage your own health care.

A Patient Portal

Many healthcare providers now offer a Patient Portal; a website where you can assess health information and medical records from this practice. The handout below explains more. You could print out this handout if you wish to share with your learner.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Patient Portal

What Is a Patient Portal?

A patient portal is a secure online website that gives you convenient 24-hour access to your personal health information and medical records—called an Electronic Health Record or EHR—from anywhere with an Internet connection.

Why Is Using a Patient Portal Important?

Accessing your personal medical records through a patient portal can help you be more actively involved in your own health care. Accessing your family members' health information can help you take care of them more easily. Also, patient portals offer self-service options that can eliminate phone tag with your doctor and sometimes even save a trip to the doctor's office.

What Can I Do With a Patient Portal?

The features of patient portals may vary, but typically you can securely view and print portions of your medical record, including recent doctor visits, discharge summaries, medications, immunizations, allergies, and most lab results anytime and from anywhere you have Web access.

Other features may include

- Exchanging secure e-mail with your health care team
- Requesting prescription refills
- Scheduling non-urgent appointments
- Checking your benefits and coverage
- Updating your contact information
- Making payments
- Downloading or completing intake forms

A patient portal may also allow you to access these features on behalf of your children or other dependent family members.

How Do I Get Access to a Patient Portal?

Ask your health care providers. If they offer a patient portal, they will provide you with instructions for setting it up. There may be a couple of steps involved in setting up your account, including creating a secure password. This is to make sure only you have access to your health information.

Once your account is set up, you'll be ready to conveniently access your health information and medical records.

Your Health Information Is Private, Secure, and Protected

Patient portals have privacy and security safeguards in place to protect your health information.

- To make sure that your private health information is safe from unauthorized access, patient portals are hosted on a secure connection and accessed via an encrypted, password-protected logon.
- EHRs also have an "audit trail" feature that keeps a record of who accessed your information, what changes were made, and when.
- Although patient portals use safeguards, there are other safety tips you should follow when accessing the patient portal. Always remember to protect your username and password from others and make sure to only log on to the patient portal from a personal or secure computer.