

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.