

Benefits

The benefits of EHRs are numerous. If you ever wondered how the pharmacist deciphered a prescription your physician wrote, you're not alone! One of the many advantages to storing your medical data electronically is that your files will be easier to read. No longer will anyone have to decipher handwritten notes — errors can be avoided.

Other benefits are:

- Electronic health records allow faster, more complete retrieval of patient health information. A physician will immediately see your current treatments, medications, allergies or prior diagnosis
- Electronic health records can be backed up. Should a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina occur, electronic health records would be stored and saved, unlike paper files which would end up lost or damaged
- Electronic health records offer many benefits, including greater security and privacy than paper records.

Accessibility

As a health care consumer, you have the right to access your personal health information. Health care providers must comply with your right to:

- Request a copy of your health records
- Request corrections be made to your records

There are circumstances when your permission is not required for a health care provider to access or share your information, such as:

- To provide treatment
- To pay providers for your care
- To protect the public's health, such as reporting flu outbreaks in your area
- To make required reports to the police, such as reporting gunshot wounds

For more information on the security and privacy of EHRs, please log onto georgiahealthinfo.gov and click the **Health Information Security and Privacy** box on the Home Page.

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Get to Know the
Facts about **Electronic
Health Information**

*It's Secure, Private
and Accessible.*

Electronic Health Information: It's Secure, Private and Accessible

Seems most information you need these days is available electronically. What if your medical records were also available electronically? The Federal government has set a goal for most Americans to have Electronic Health Records by 2014.

What is an Electronic Health Record (EHR)? It is a computerized version of your medical data. Many physicians across Georgia are in the process of converting traditional paper records to EHRs. With EHRs, your medical information is electronically stored and can be shared by physicians treating you. Physicians using EHRs can instantly see your medical history including test results, allergies, and medications so time could be saved in an emergency, as well as money, by not repeating costly medical tests. Some of the other benefits of EHRs include providing greater security and privacy than paper records.

Soon health providers with EHRs will be able to join a network for Health Information Exchange (HIE). HIE is the electronic sharing of health-related information among organizations. For example, your cardiologist could electronically retrieve your health records from your primary care physician making your treatment faster and safer.

Security

Since one of the main goal of EHRs is to improve health care by electronically storing and sharing health information, you may have concerns about the security of your medical records. Just like paper records, EHRs must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy and Security Rules, regulations that require your health information to be protected. Unlike paper records, EHRs may be set up so that only authorized individuals can access your information.

Other security features designed to protect your information may include:

- A valid user identification code (password) and a personal identification number (PIN) are required to access the computer system
- A tracking system detects who has looked at your health information
- Health care providers are trained to handle health information and protect the integrity, security and privacy of your information

Privacy

While electronic health records make accessing your records more convenient, your privacy is still a priority. You have the right to access your personal health information, and provide your authorization to disclose sensitive information such as drug, alcohol or mental health treatment.

The HIPAA Privacy Rule recognizes that health care providers must take appropriate and reasonable steps to protect the privacy of your information. The Rule requires that information shared among health professionals be limited to the minimum amount necessary to perform his/her job.

