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:

- EHRs allow faster, more complete retrieval of patient health information. A physician will immediately see your current treatments, medications, allergies or prior diagnosis
- EHRs can be backed up. Should a natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina occur, EHRs would be stored and saved, unlike paper files which may end up lost or damaged
- EHRs can be protected so only authorized individuals can access them making their security and privacy easier to maintain than with 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.

Georgia Department of Community Health

GA eHealthInfo
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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 history. 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. Other benefits of EHRs include providing greater security and privacy of your health information.

Soon health providers with EHRs will be able to join a network for Health Information Exchange (HIE). HIE allows EHRs to be shared between providers, patients and other authorized persons. For example, your cardiologist could electronically retrieve your health records from your primary care physician making your treatment faster and safer.

Security & Privacy

While EHRs make accessing your records more convenient, your privacy is still a priority. You have the right to access your personal health information, and to authorize the disclosure of sensitive information such as drug, alcohol or mental health treatment to providers of your choice.

Like many people, you may have concerns about the security of EHRs. EHRs must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy and Security Rules, which requires health care providers to take appropriate and reasonable steps to protect the privacy of your information and that the sharing of information among health professionals be limited to the minimum amount necessary to perform his/her job.

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) as requirements to access the EHR
- An electronic tracking system could be used to document and monitor who has looked at your health information

Patient Safety

EHRs can improve patient safety by helping providers identify adverse drug reactions, allergies or other complications. Providers can send reminders about scheduled tests, review all test results and establish better profiles of each patient's medical history. Medical errors can be reduced while the quality of health care is improved.