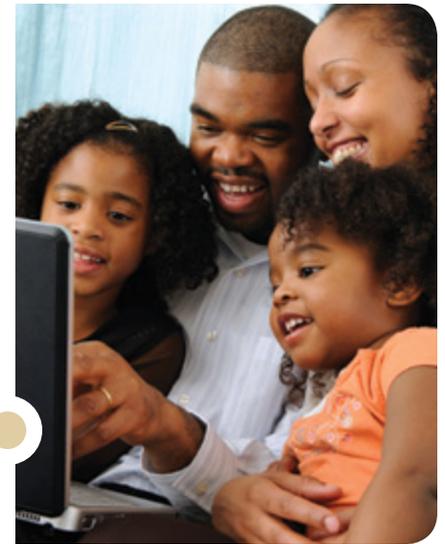


Consumer Benefits of Health IT

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Health information technology (or health IT) helps patients, providers and others collect, share and use secure electronic health information to support communication and shared decision-making. Health IT is helping create a health care system in which consumers can better contribute to and shape their health care experience.

Health IT Benefits Consumers in a Number of Ways:

- Providers can easily access the information they need to provide patients with high-quality, coordinated care.
- Consumers have convenient access to real-time information in order to better manage their health and care for loved ones.
- Consumers and their providers can communicate more easily.
- Consumers can collect and contribute data about their own health.

Giving Providers Critical Information:

- Electronic health records (EHRs) contain the electronic history of a patient's medical care, including health conditions, medications, diagnoses and allergies. EHRs make it easier for doctors to exchange key information and better coordinate care as patients transition from one care setting to another.

- If Nancy goes to the emergency room, the treating physician can know about her blood-thinning medication before performing procedures or prescribing antibiotics—both of which can cause severe bleeding.



Providing Consumers Access to Their Health Information:

- Patient portals give patients and authorized caregivers online access to the personal health information contained in their providers' EHRs. Using a secure log-on, consumers can view health information such as medications and upcoming appointments. Access to this information helps consumers become more aware of the state of their health, inform providers about discrepancies or mistakes in their records and share new or additional information.
 - Nancy can review her medication list to confirm that she is taking the recommended dosage.

Meet Nancy

Nancy is a 57-year-old woman who suffered a heart attack four months ago. She is taking a blood thinner to prevent future blood clots. This medicine can cause severe bleeding, so Nancy must monitor her level of blood clotting daily and report it to her doctor. She has to watch her diet because eating too much vitamin K (found in foods like spinach) can cause her blood to clot. Nancy is also starting to make lifestyle changes to improve her heart health.

Fostering Better Consumer-Provider Communication:

- Secure messaging (or secure email) enables consumers and caregivers to ask questions, share concerns and provide pertinent information to their providers. Electronic reminders about preventive and follow-up care support consumers in their efforts to stay healthy. Telemedicine lets consumers receive certain types of care long-distance by communicating with their providers in real-time, often via video feed.
 - Nancy can send a secure email to ask questions about the side effects from her medication and receive instructions about changing her dosage.

Allowing Consumers to Generate and Contribute Data:

- There are thousands of smartphone apps to help consumers monitor their own health. Wearable devices help consumers better manage their care by tracking their activity levels, sleep and other vital health indicators. Technology helps consumers share this kind of patient-generated health information with their providers. Patient

data complement clinical data and provide a more complete picture of patients' health, thus helping to shape care decisions.

- Nancy can use an app to track her vitamin K intake to help her make better dietary choices that do not work against her blood-thinning medication.

Editorial Note – The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at www.NationalPartnership.org.

Editorial Note – The Consumer Partnership for eHealth (CPeH) is a coalition of more than 50 consumer, patient, and labor organizations working at the national, state, and local levels to advance private and secure health information technology in ways that measurably improve the lives of individuals and their families. The combined membership of CPeH represents more than 127 million Americans.

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