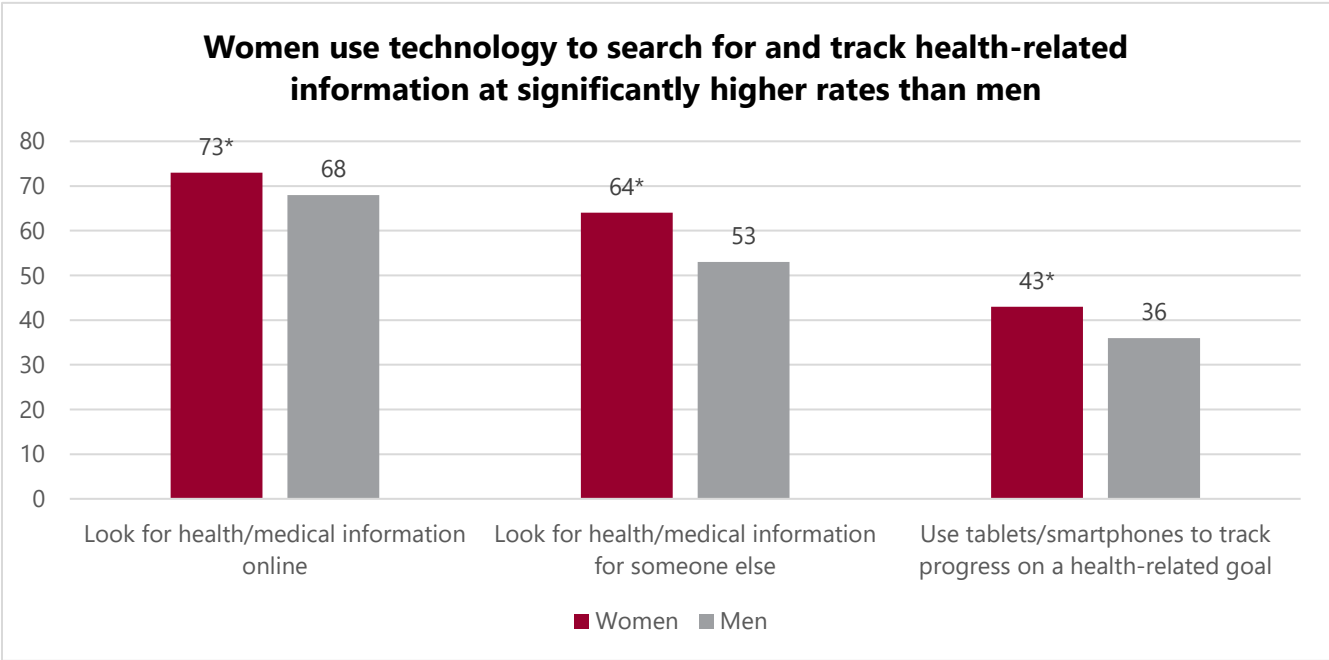


# HINTS 2017: Women and Health Information Seeking

APRIL 2018

Women rely more heavily than men on digital tools to find and understand health information. This is a key takeaway from the 2017 [Health Information National Trends Survey \(HINTS\)](#), for which the National Partnership worked with the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to develop digital health questions, analyze responses and interpret findings. Since 2003, the National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) HINTS has collected nationally representative data about people’s use of health information. For the most recent survey, NCI included questions about online access to and consumer use of health information technology (IT). In this fact sheet, we summarize key findings and recommendations for advancing women’s use of digital tools for health. HINTS 2017 survey questions and data are available [here](#).

## Key Findings



\* p < .05

## Women use technology to support health goals.

- ▶ Forty-seven percent of women have health-related apps, such as My Fitness Pal or Ovia, on their smartphone or tablet, compared to 41 percent of men.
- ▶ Forty-three percent of women use tablets or smartphones to help them track progress on a health-related goal such as quitting smoking, losing weight or increasing physical activity, compared to 36 percent of men.

## Women use technology to engage with others about health.

- ▶ Women are significantly more likely than men to have sent or received a text message to or from their health care provider within the last year (32 percent of women compared to 26 percent of men).
- ▶ Women are significantly more likely than men to share health information on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter (19 percent of women compared to 11 percent of men).
- ▶ Women are significantly more likely than men to participate in online support groups for people with a similar health/medical issues (nine percent of women compared to five percent of men).

For additional statistics and analysis, click [here](#).

## Recommendations

It's not surprising that women are leveraging digital health tools more than men to access and share information to help manage their own health or care for others. After all, women make almost 80 percent of health care decisions for their families,<sup>1</sup> nearly two-thirds of caregivers are women,<sup>2</sup> and women have more health needs than men.<sup>3</sup> The following recommendations would advance electronic health information access and make it easier for people to use smart devices (including mobile apps) to manage their health information.

- ▶ **Health care systems and providers** should upgrade to the 2015 Edition of certified electronic health record (EHR), which requires application programming interfaces (APIs). APIs make it possible for people to pull in health data from multiple health care providers and hospitals using their preferred apps, which can help them better organize, understand and act on their health data.
- ▶ **App developers** should adopt and use ONC's Model Privacy Notice (MPN), which discloses in plain language how an apps or device uses, shares and protects health information. Widespread use of the MPN would make it easier for consumers to choose an app or device based on their privacy and security preferences.

### Recommendations at a Glance

- Upgrade to the 2015 Edition of certified electronic health record (EHR).
- Adopt and use ONC's Model Privacy Notice.
- Collect and integrate robust health information that women are generating and storing on their mobile devices.
- Classify refusals to share information with patients, authorized caregivers or designated apps as "unreasonable information blocking."
- Do a better job informing people about their rights to their electronic health information.

- ▶ **Health care providers and health systems** should explore ways to collect and integrate into their medical records the kind of robust health information that women are generating and storing on their mobile devices. This could open the door to additional treatment and wellness strategies that leverage patients' existing mobile behaviors.
- ▶ As **policymakers** draft rules to address information blocking as required by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act, they should classify refusals to share information with patients, authorized caregivers or designated apps as unreasonable information blocking.
- ▶ If we are to maximize available digital health tools to achieve a more patient-centered health care system, **health care payers, policymakers, federal agencies, providers and advocates** must do a better job informing people about their **rights** to their electronic health information, including their right to have their health information sent to an app of their choice.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. (2013, December). *General Facts on Women and Job Based Health*. Retrieved 24 January 2018, from <https://www.dol.gov/sites/default/files/ebsa/about-ebsa/our-activities/resource-center/fact-sheets/women-and-job-based-health.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. (2009, November). *Caregiving in the U.S. 2009*. Retrieved 3 April 2018, from [http://www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving\\_in\\_the\\_US\\_2009\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.caregiving.org/data/Caregiving_in_the_US_2009_full_report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See note 1.

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The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, reproductive health and rights, 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 [NationalPartnership.org](http://NationalPartnership.org).

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