

## What is an EHR?

An EHR is when your health record is in a digital format. That means a computer is used to record, store and review your health information.

There's an easy way to tell if your doctor uses an EHR system. Does the nurse or doctor bring a medical chart into the exam room? Or does the nurse or doctor use a computer or small hand-held device to enter information into your record?

## What information is in an EHR?

The same kind of information that is in your health chart is in your EHR. Your EHR might include:

- Basic information, such as name, address, phone number and emergency contact
- Health history
- List of medications, allergies and shots you have had
- Laboratory test results, such as blood work
- Radiology images, such as X-rays, CAT scans and MRIs
- Advanced directives, living wills, and health powers of attorney



For more information about Electronic Health Records, please visit the PA REACH West Web site at:

[www.pareachwest.org](http://www.pareachwest.org)

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# ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS

## What You Need to Know



## How is an EHR system good for my doctor and me?

### Reduces errors:

- Eliminates errors caused by illegible handwriting
- Checks to make sure the drugs you are taking are not harmful when taken with other drugs

### Improves security:

- Allows your doctor to make a back up copy of all health records. If the office catches fire or floods, the health records are safe
- Allows your doctor to keep track of, and to limit, who looks at your health record

### Saves time:

- Ends searching for a lost health chart
- Ends thumbing through the pages of your health chart

### Improves care:

- Tells your doctor when it's time for you to get tests and shots, such as a yearly flu shot
- Tells your doctor when he needs to follow up on lab tests, especially if they show you have a problem



## How can sharing my EHR be good for my health?

An EHR can let your doctor send and receive health information about you over the Internet. Your doctor can share information about you with other doctors, as well as with hospitals, labs and the drug store. Here are some of the benefits:

- You don't have to fill out your health history over and over.
- Once you inform your doctor about your medications and allergies, you don't have to worry about forgetting to inform a new doctor.
- Other than routine tests, you won't have to get the same tests twice because your doctor can see if another doctor has already ordered it.
- Your health history will be easy to get to in an emergency.
- Your doctor can send your prescription to the drug store, so you don't have to take it or wait for it to be filled.

## How could an EHR help me in an emergency?

When EHRs are used across the nation, they could be a lifesaver. Here's an example of how it could work. 64 year-old Barbara has a pacemaker. She is allergic to penicillin but takes medication for diabetes and high blood pressure. While on vacation, she is involved in a car accident and knocked unconscious. When she wakes up in the emergency room, she is disoriented and can't remember what medications she takes.

If Barbara's physician in Pennsylvania had an EHR system, he could be contacted immediately and could use the Internet to instantly send her health record to the ER doctor. Her medical information would be complete

and organized, and the emergency room doctor would be able to quickly provide safe, appropriate care. This quick transfer of Barbara's medical information could be lifesaving!



**REMEMBER:**  
Your EHR is a legal document, and is protected by state & federal laws.