

## Q: What is eHealth?

**A:** eHealth is the use of a computer network, instead of paper, to store and manage your medical records. The “e” in eHealth is short for “electronic.” In eHealth networks, you can make information about your health available to doctors and other care providers you choose, so you can get better care. eHealth is also sometimes called “health information technology.”

## Q: What can eHealth do for me?

**A:** Medical records are reports about your illnesses, injuries, medicines and/or test results. If you’ve changed doctors, seen a specialist, visited a clinic, or checked into a hospital, your records are likely on paper and in different places. This makes it hard to pull them all together for a complete picture of your health. eHealth can help to solve that problem.

## Here’s how eHealth can help you:

- When your records are easily available in one place on a computer, your doctors can see a more complete picture of your health, and you can get better care.
- You can skip wasteful and sometimes risky duplicate medical tests.
- Information that could save your life in an emergency is easy to get to in a hurry.
- You won’t always have to answer the same questions every time you visit a doctor, clinic, or a hospital.
- Your information is safe in a system that can only be used by the people who are caring for you, and only with your consent.
- You can better access and manage your own health records and those of your family members.

## Q: Why are we talking about eHealth now?

**A:** Computers, email, and networks have changed the way we do lots of things, like shopping, banking, and staying in touch with friends. Many people think their health records are already stored in computers—but most are still in old-fashioned paper folders. Until we started eHealth networks, there was no way to easily share medical records. New York State has been working to get doctors and other health care professionals connected through eHealth computer networks for a couple of years. Now the system is ready to serve patients.

## Q: What is New York State doing to support eHealth?

**A:** New York State is a national leader in eHealth. Government and private sector money is helping doctors and healthcare organizations in New York to share medical records with each other through eHealth. One way New York is doing this is with local eHealth networks called RHIOs—Regional Health Information Organizations. RHIOs are groups of hospitals and other healthcare organizations near each other that can share health information about patients through private and secure computer networks. RHIOs get information about patients from hospitals, physicians, pharmacies, clinical laboratories, health insurers, the Medicaid program, and other places that have provided them with medical care or health insurance. **Doctors and others involved in your care can use eHealth to view the health information about you in a RHIO only if you say they can by giving your consent.**

## Q: What is “consent” for eHealth in New York?

**A:** According to New York law, no one can access the information about you in a RHIO using eHealth unless you say so by giving your consent. If your doctor or other care provider participates in eHealth through a RHIO, he or she will give you a consent form so you can decide whether he or she (and their staff) are allowed to see your information to help give you better care.

## Q: Who is in charge of eHealth in New York?

**A:** With support from the New York State Department of Health, health care leaders from across the state set up a nonprofit called the New York eHealth Collaborative (NYeC) [www.nyehealth.org](http://www.nyehealth.org). With NYeC and lots of input from doctors, patient groups, and others, the state is writing rules about eHealth to protect your privacy and security and to make sure that different RHIOs can share information with each other as part of a growing statewide network.

## Q: Can I get access to my own medical records?

**A:** By law you already have the right to get a copy of your medical record, even if it’s just on paper. Some doctors, hospitals, and other healthcare organizations in New York can allow you to view your record on a secure website or as an electronic personal health record (PHR). New York State is working to make these services available to all.



**Q: What's happening with eHealth outside of New York?**

**A:** The use of eHealth is growing across the country. The US government is helping to pay for some of the costs of eHealth computers and networks. Many public and private organizations, including health plans, employers, and independent companies are developing other ehealth tools including personal health records (PHRs) .

**ABOUT YOUR PRIVACY**

Many people are worried about privacy and security when it comes to eHealth. Information can never be completely secure. This is true whether it's on paper or in a computer. But eHealth could make electronic records safer than paper ones. Here's how New York State is protecting your privacy:

- Only people and organizations whom you choose through a consent form (like your doctor and his or her staff) are allowed to access your records through New York's eHealth network.
- Safeguards like passwords and other protections will protect your records from being accessed without proper permission.
- You can request a list of everyone who has accessed your records using eHealth.
- If illegal access does occur, you will be told, and steps will be taken to correct the problem so it won't happen again.
- Backups of your records are made so they will still be available in the event of disaster.

Although most people choose to participate in eHealth, you have the right not to. You can say "yes"—or "no"— through the consent form available from your provider.

**Q: Where can I get more information about ehealth?**

**A:** Go to [www.ehealth4ny.org](http://www.ehealth4ny.org)



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State of New York  
Department of Health



**Better**  
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A guide to eHealth  
for New Yorkers