

a healthy conversation

Why you should try your doctor's patient portal

From Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

It's likely your doctor has traded in a clipboard for a laptop. It's also possible your doctor's office and insurer have asked you to sign up for a patient portal, perhaps to pay your bills or make appointments online. Patient portals are ultimately a way to allow patients to interact and communicate with their health care providers online.

Some of the things you can do on a physician patient portal include: Book and keep track of appointments; Access and view lab results; Request prescription refills; View your personal health record; Receive health reminders from your physician; and view and pay billing statements. Insurer patient portals allow you to: Check claims and know if they've been paid; see if a procedure is covered; check the prices of your prescriptions and access member discounts for products or services.

Still not convinced? If your doctor's office or insurer has a patient portal, here are a few more reasons you should give it a try:

- **BE MORE INFORMED.**

Having access to your health data whenever you want can help you make sure you're getting the right care at the right time. Particularly if you have a chronic disease, such as diabetes, asthma or heart disease, it may be easier when doctors and patients have access to the same information. A recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that people with diabetes seen by doctors who used electronic health records (as opposed to paper records) were 35 percent more likely to get all the recommended screening measures, such as eye exams and blood sugar tests. What's more, they were 15 percent more likely to have favorable outcomes on those measures.

- **CONVENIENCE.** A patient portal can provide you with the information you need when it's convenient for you. For example, you can look up your lab results or check your coverage at any time. Patient portals allow you to stay in touch more frequently

and with greater ease.

- **ACCURACY.** Studies show patients remember less than half of what they're told in the office or on the phone. Electronic health records document your office visits, diagnoses and more, so everyone is on the same page.

- **FASTER FEEDBACK.** Government guidelines require lab results to be posted on the patient portal within 96 hours of the doctor's office receiving them. This means no more waiting for a phone call or a letter.

- **ENHANCES TRUST.** Having open records and doctors' notes can enhance trust between patients and doctors. While it may seem impersonal, online communication can actually improve your relationship with your doctor.

Ask your physician for information about if they have a patient portal and how you can access your information. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield members have access to their patient portal once they register at Wellmark.com.

Brought to you by: