



What is Health Information Exchange (HIE)?

Health information exchange (HIE) is the secure, electronic transmission of health care related data among medical providers, facilities, patients, and health information organizations. HIE improves the quality, safety, and cost of patient care.

Health information includes medical history, current medications, lab results, and allergies. Timely electronic sharing of health information can help providers make better decisions about patient care. It allows providers to:

- Improve diagnoses
- Avoid medication errors
- Avoid duplicate tests

The technology that supports HIE is always changing and improving. Different types of HIE can be used to share health care data for different purposes. Here are some examples of how HIE helps:

- A primary care provider securely emails a lab report to a specialist when referring a patient, which means that the specialist does not have to re-order the same lab test.
- A health information organization sends a notification to a care manager letting them know that their patient has been admitted to the hospital. The care manager can then reach out to the patient to help schedule follow up appointments.
- An emergency department doctor searches for patient health records from other hospitals in the area and pulls them into their Electronic Health Record system. After learning about a preexisting condition from the patient's health record, the emergency department can better treat the patient.
- A patient accesses a list of their prescribed medications and shares this information with a specialist using a smartphone.

The safety and security of patient health information is an important part of HIE. State and federal laws governing the exchange of health information to protect patient privacy. The [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 \(HIPAA\)](#) is a federal law that establishes data privacy and security requirements for safeguarding the exchange of medical information. States laws set additional privacy standards and requirements for health information exchange.