



# Factsheet

---

Date:

28 June 2023

---

## The benefits of electronic patient records

An electronic patient record (EPR) is a collection of electronic documents and data containing important information associated with patients' health. EPR are issued by specialist EPR providers known as core communities and are owned by patients. Healthcare professionals such as doctors, pharmacists, nurses and therapists use the medical information in EPR for the purposes of the treatment they administer and constantly add to it by updating it.

### Treatment-relevant documents

EPR contain copies of documents that are deemed to be treatment-relevant. These contain medical information that is important for the further treatment of patients by other healthcare professionals. For example, doctors, pharmacists or nurses can compile a medication list, case report or hospital discharge summary in a patient's EPR. Patients can also upload documents to their EPR, such as their living will, organ donor card or earlier findings.

Hospitals, clinics, retirement and nursing homes, birthing centres and all doctor's surgeries that have opened since the beginning of 2022 are obliged to store important health information in EPRs as soon as patients have opened one. Participation is voluntary for doctor's surgeries, pharmacies, midwife practices and home-care services that existed prior to 2022.

### Electronic vaccination certificate

Health data can be uploaded to EPR as PDF, but also as audio, video or image files. The next step will be to provide structured formats, in other words documents that can be constantly updated. One such structured format that will be available by the end of 2023, for instance, is electronic vaccination certificates. After that, medication plans will be incorporated, a step that will provide valuable support for people with chronic conditions in particular. The data format for recording allergies and electronic prescriptions is currently under development. Additional formats such as electronic referrals and electronic medical alert cards are due to be introduced at a later date.

### Benefits of electronic patient records

EPR can be accessed via a secure internet connection at any time and on any device, such as computers, tablets or smartphones. Patients can view their key documents at any time and carry out actions such as checking they are up-to-date on vaccinations in their electronic vaccination certificate.

When they are having treatment, patients can make all the information that has been collected available to the healthcare professionals. That spares them the task of acting as a messenger to the people responsible for their treatment and saves them having to constantly repeat the details of their illness.

#### Further information:

Federal Office of Public Health, Communication, [www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch)  
This publication is also available in French, Italian and German.

## **Better treatment quality and patient safety**

The most important aims of EPR are to improve treatment quality and patient safety. If healthcare professionals have easier and at the same time secure access to treatment-relevant documents, they can access information faster, make a diagnosis and start appropriate treatment. As a result, unnecessary treatment steps can be avoided. Having a medication plan ensures that an up-to-date and complete list of medicines is available. This is essential for avoiding interactions that could potentially be dangerous for patients. Such direct access to important documents is particularly crucial in medical emergencies. In such situations, EPR give the professionals carrying out the treatment access to information without the patient's explicit consent.

EPR can also be helpful for health promotion and prevention purposes. Information on individual prevention – for example the results of a preventive examination or blood pressure results – can be stored and made accessible in EPR.

EPR also strengthen patients' rights and health literacy by giving them direct access to the most important documents without them having to specifically ask their doctor or a hospital. As a result, they can make a more active and autonomous contribution to the treatment process.

## **Simplified collaboration between healthcare professionals**

Nowadays, interprofessional collaboration is a part of everyday life for most healthcare professionals. More and more people from a range of specialised groups are involved in treatment. Even minor health-related complaints may involve a doctor, pharmacist and therapist. The more healthcare professionals are involved, the more a coordinated and efficient working relationship is required.

As an integrative platform for data exchange, EPR obviate the need for telephone queries or for requesting documents from other healthcare professionals, and thus reduces transmission errors. The data standardisation provided by EPR – particularly the structured exchange formats – allow the various healthcare facilities to share and read this medical information without having to deal with potential software compatibility issues. The more healthcare professionals and patients participate in the EPR system, the better and more efficiently the information will flow, which will in turn benefit medical treatment.

### **Further information:**

Federal Office of Public Health, Communication, [www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch)

This publication is also available in French, Italian and German.