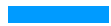


## **One Senior Place: What is a patient portal? Be patient and we'll fill you in**



Brenda Lyle | Special to FLORIDA TODAY

Q: Why does my doctor want me to use the "patient portal?"

A: Fun fact: Medical records date back to hieroglyphic inscriptions found as early as 3,000 B.C.

Paper medical records began filling filing cabinets in the early 1900s. When

computers arrived on the scene in the 1980s, electronic health records were born.

Now, it's rare to spot someone sitting with a clipboard in the doctor's office.

Even emergency rooms may have someone tapping away on a computer tablet to enter your information during treatment.

When did the world change?

***Previous three One Senior Place columns:***

**Don't wait:** It's a smart idea to arrange your advanced directives sooner than later

**Know the difference:** How is a nurse practitioner different from a doctor?

**Also, know this difference:** Skilled nursing facility, long-term care facility different types of care

## **History of EHR**

The use of Electronic Health Records (EHR) really began in the 1990s.

At first, EHR were mostly used in hospital systems.

By 2015, physician offices and smaller care facilities began to utilize EHR.

Now, it is common for a patient to be handed an electronic device to complete their paperwork.

Amazingly, this digital integration makes test results and images immediately available to the physician during the patient visit!

The patient (and HIPAA approved caregivers) can also access their own records any time — if they are agreeable to using a "patient portal."

### **What is a patient portal?**

A patient portal provides online access to your health records from a secure website maintained by your physician's office or hospital.

If your local hospital system has a patient portal, any physician you visit (within that health system) can access your medical records, test results, images and medication lists.

Some portals allow you to send messages to providers, to request referrals and medication refills.

This ensures continuity of care between medical specialists.

Importantly, it can prevent the overprescribing of medications.

Best of all, putting patients in control of their medical records allows for better communication between doctor and patient.

### **Is the technology difficult?**

Patient portals are designed to be user friendly.

Often, the physician's office will direct you to the website and assign you a username and password to gain access to the portal.

Are you technologically challenged? Helpful online videos can provide an overview.

If you do not use a computer or a smartphone, your health care surrogate,

trusted family member or care manager can help.

If you are already working with a Certified Care Manager, then you know these professionals are specially trained to help seniors with the aging process from soup to nuts.

They will maintain your patient portal for you as a matter of course, accompany you to your physician appointments, manage your medication and so much more.

Questions? One Senior Place is only a phone call away to help you navigate your senior journey.

*One Senior Place is a marketplace for resources and provider of information, advice, care and on-site services for seniors and their families. Questions for this column are answered by professionals in nursing, social work, care management and in-home care. Send questions to [AskOSP@OneSeniorPlace.com](mailto:AskOSP@OneSeniorPlace.com), call 321-751-6771 or visit [The Experts in Aging at OneSeniorPlace.com](https://www.OneseniorPlace.com).*

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