Improving the Medical Home Through the Use of Health Information Technology
A Fact Sheet for Families

Technology makes our lives easier and saves us time—ATMs, online shopping, and scanners at the grocery store. Technology is also very important in the world of medicine and health care—it can help put information like tests, x-rays, and MRIs at the fingertips of those who need it. Now, because of technology like the Internet, anyone can access information about health-related topics.

Many people want a more "hands-on" role when it comes to managing their family's health and health care. For example, families are often interested in new ways to communicate and partner with their child's doctor, such as through e-mail.

For your doctor, technology can help him/her provide a medical home for your children (see box at the right). An important part of the medical home is secure communication and transfer of your child's health care information. To ensure quality care, that information often needs to be shared with other health care providers, hospitals, and community programs. Health information technology (HIT) can make that possible!

Doctors can access their patients' health information, improve communication with families, and coordinate with other providers by using some of the HIT tools below.

You may wish to talk with your doctor about whether or not these HIT tools are available in his/her practice. If they are available, ask how you can use these tools to take a more active role in your child's health care.

> **Your Child's Medical Home**
> A medical home is the kind of primary health care we all want and deserve. A medical home is not a place—it is the way care is provided to your child and your family.
>
> At the core of a medical home is a knowledgeable, compassionate health care provider and care team. They are chosen by a patient and their family to take care of health needs and to make sure care is well-coordinated.

HIT "tools" include:

- **Electronic health records (EHR)** – An individual's medical record in a digital format—which means a computer is used to record, store, and review medical information.

- **Personal health records (PHR)** – A record of an individual's health. The record could include information from multiple sources (eg, patient, family, doctors, and other health care professionals). The difference between an EHR and a PHR is that a PHR is controlled by and available to the patient, while an EHR is controlled by the doctor and is usually not available to the patient.

- **Patient portal** - Allows patients to communicate with their doctor and access important information over the Internet securely. A doctor can send reminders, health information, and lab results electronically to patients. Patients can send questions to the doctor and provider updates about their health concerns.

- **Family-centered care plan** - A care plan is developed with the family to include all current and past medical and social aspects of a child and family's strengths and needs. It also includes current contact information.

- **Patient registry** – Helps a doctor keep track of a certain part of their patient population (eg, all children with asthma). A doctor can also use this information to identify needs and improve quality of care.

- **Patient post-visit summary** – A summary of what occurred during the office visit and any follow-up that is needed. A summary may also include age-appropriate information.

- **e-prescribing** – Allows a health care professional to send a prescription directly to a pharmacy from his/her office.

- **Tracking** – The process of following everything from lab and x-ray results to referrals to other health care providers. A doctor can then make sure any necessary follow-up is done.

Want to learn more? Here are some resources for families about HIT and the medical home:

- **Office of the National Coordinator (ONC)—HealthIT.gov – Patients & Families**
  www.healthit.gov/patients-families
  This Web site addresses the benefits of HIT through topics such as:
  - What is health IT?
  - How health IT can lead to safer, better, and more efficient health care
  - Take control of your health with e-health tools
  - Get tips on protecting your health information privacy
  - Learn how to be more involved in your own health care
- **National Partnership for Women & Families**
  - *The Consumer Platform for Health IT: Advancing Patient and Family Engagement through Technology*
    www.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/CPeH_Platform_for_Health_IT_Final_5.6.2011.pdf?docID=8661
    This publication includes information on how to be more involved in your health care, better communicate with doctors, and keep better records and also discusses security of health care information.
- **US Department of Health and Human Services HIT Web site**
  - Electronic Health Records: What Your Patients Need to Know (for health care professionals)
    http://ehealthwv.com/shared/content/ehealth_wv_files/EHRWhatYourPatientsNeedtoKnow4_09.pdf
  - Electronic Health Records: What You Need to Know (for patients)
    http://ehealthwv.com/shared/content/ehealth_wv_files/EHRWhat%20YouNeedtoKnow4_09.pdf

- **National Center for Medical Home Implementation (NCMHI)**
  The NCMHI is a cooperative agreement between the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The NCMHI helps health professionals, families, and others to create a medical home for all children and youth.
  - Building Your Care Notebook
    www.medicalhomeinfo.org/for_families/care_notebook/
    A care notebook is an organizing tool for families. It will help you keep track of important information and give you an ongoing record of your child's care, services, and providers. A care notebook can help empower you to become the expert in your child's care. In addition to keeping printed care records, care notebooks can be saved on a computer or on a flash drive so that your records are more portable.
  - Medical Home Fact Sheets in English and Spanish
    www.medicalhomeinfo.org/how/care_partnership_support.aspx#marketing
    The NCMHI has fact sheets for providers, parents, and children/youth that talk about the importance of a medical home. Providers can use these fact sheets to help create partnerships with their patients and their families. They are also available in Spanish.

This fact sheet can be found on www.medicalhomeinfo.org/for_families/partner_with_physician.aspx.

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Child Health Informatics Center

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MEDICAL HOME IMPLEMENTATION
A cooperative agreement between the Maternal and Child Health Bureau/HRSA and the American Academy of Pediatrics

February 2012