

HIPAA Basics

Question	Answer
	HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) is a federal law that protects a patient's personal health information. It provides you with guidelines on how to access, share, and protect patient information.
	HIPAA is a law that all healthcare institutions must abide by. We want to maintain our patients' trust and loyalty and we want to protect our patients from breaches of identity that could lead to theft, fraud, and /or embarrassing and uncomfortable situations.
	PHI stands for Protected Health Information and it is all the patient information, both personal and medical details, which could identify who the patient is.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient name • Date of birth • Contact information (home and email addresses, phone number, etc) • Social security number • Age • Diagnosis • Written communications, memos, emails • Patient stamper plates • Electronic forms • Verbal conversations • IV and medication labels • X-rays, monitors, EKGs, etc
	You may access and share patient information for the purpose of the patient's medical treatment, payment, and business operations.
	In general, you should access the minimal amount of patient information you need in order to complete the purpose at hand. For example, if you need to access today's lab result there is no need to access and share the patient's social security number or past medical history.
	You should not access any patient information if you are not involved in the treatment process and care of the patient. You should not look up information pertaining to friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, celebrities, etc. out of curiosity.
	<p>Some tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist the temptation to peek into patient information for which you are NOT completing a healthcare related task. • Screen PHI from public view: shield keystrokes, computer entry, and writing; never leave patient charts or computer screens open or unattended. • Think twice when talking about PHI: take confidential conversations to a private area, never hold an in-person or phone conversation about patients in public areas (elevators, restrooms, hallways, etc.), lower your voice when sharing PHI in areas where others might overhear, and always ask the patient in advance if it is acceptable to speak with his or her family members. • Double check forms. Check to make sure that you are giving the correct paperwork to the right member or patient. • Never post any PHI about a patient on social media • Never dispose of anything containing PHI in the regular trash. Place paper with PHI in shredding boxes. • Prevent unauthorized individuals from accessing patient and secure areas • Never share your computer passwords and always logout when leaving your computer • When faxing PHI, assure you have the correct number, verify that the recipient is authorized to receive the info, and never send more PHI than is needed.