

Eisenhower Physicians and Patients Stay Connected



The Internet has long been an indispensable tool in the medical community, providing health care professionals with online access to the latest research, journal articles, and information on new technologies. Many physicians at Eisenhower are expanding their use of online resources in an effort to stay better connected with their patients, and in some cases, provide online consultations that will save patients the time of office visits.

Earlier this year, Eisenhower Medical Center announced a new partnership with RelayHealth®, a leading provider of health care connectivity services, that allows participating physicians to have secure, easy online access to patient information, and gives patients online access to their doctor's office. The new program stores patient medical records, and allows patients to use the Internet to e-mail doctors, schedule office appointments, view lab results, request referrals, refill prescriptions and receive health information—all from the convenience of their own computer. It also gives physicians and patients the option to perform online doctors' appointments.

More than 75 doctors affiliated with Eisenhower currently use the system to share test results with their patients, prescribe medications electronically, and coordinate care with the other members of a patient's medical team. Some physicians also use an online evaluation called a "webVisit" to determine the nature of a patient's health concern, and whether he or she needs to see a doctor. The confidentiality of all communications is protected by the highly secure RelayHealth.

For Eisenhower patients, many of whom travel extensively or live only part-time in the area, the ability to maintain their medical files electronically and easily transport them to other doctors or institutions is one of the key benefits of RelayHealth. Patients are also eligible to use the service to create their own online personal health record, enabling them to keep track of their own health care needs. *Eisenhower's investment in RelayHealth demonstrates another major and creative step forward to improve our connection to patients and their families and to achieve a truly connected health care community regardless of specialty and setting,* says G. Aubrey Serfling, Chief Executive Officer and President, Eisenhower Medical Center. *"Accessibility of the latest patient data and electronic communications means that doctors can immediately make decisions that positively influence outcomes and create true continuity of care with every patient."*

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Most routine communications, such as scheduling appointments or refilling prescriptions, are free to the patient. There may be a fee associated with a webVisit, but that charge is reimbursed by some major health insurance plans.

Both patients and physicians cite the convenience of online communication as the principal benefit of the new Relay Health service. Physicians can respond quickly to a patient's concerns, and patients can communicate with their doctor's office from any location. The ability to share medical records electronically saves both patients and doctors valuable time, and helps ensure that physicians have a comprehensive picture of a patient's health profile. Eisenhower officials expect the number of physicians and patients using the service to expand as more people become accustomed to using the Internet as a principal communications tool.