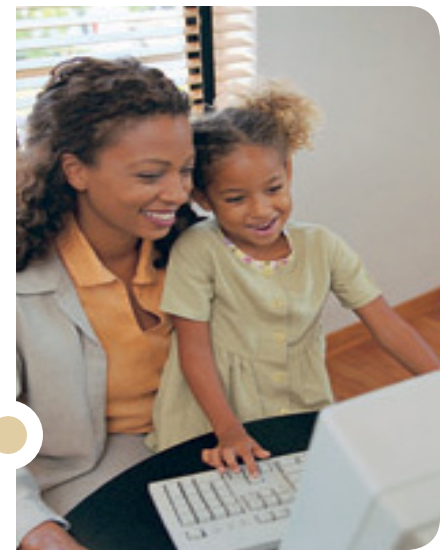# What Health IT Means
For Women

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On average, women use the health care system to a greater extent than men, and thus stand to benefit more from greater access to their own health information and electronic tools that help them manage their health and coordinate their care.

What is Health Information Technology?

- Health information technology (or health IT) enables collecting, storing, sharing, and using electronic health information for communication and decision-making by patients, providers and others. Technology is a key component of an effective patient-centered health care system. Health IT offers health care providers access to the information they need about their patients, facilitating more comprehensive, coordinated care. Health IT also helps engage women and support them in their roles as patients, mothers and caregivers.

Women as Consumers of Health Care

- Part of women's high use of the health care system stems from care during pregnancy. Women are also more likely to visit their primary care providers for their annual exams, as well as to take advantage of preventative services, such

Meet Yvonne

Yvonne is a 42-year-old woman who was diagnosed with diabetes three years ago. Thanks to health IT, she can now look up her recent lab results on the patient portal her doctor offers. Yvonne can also check her medication regimen and download an app on her smartphone to monitor and track her glucose levels. Yvonne's doctor can easily review her glucose levels, as well as provide tailored educational materials to help Yvonne manage her diabetes.

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as flu shots. Furthermore, women are more likely than men to look up health information on the internet.

- Having easy access to their own medical records and health history is vital for women to coordinate their care and manage their health. Using technology, women are now able to securely download health information and send it to other providers, health apps, personal health records (PHRs) or other secure places of their choosing.

- Health IT can provide women and their doctors with easier ways to communicate with each other. Women can receive reminders from their doctors about appointments and preventative care, and follow-up instructions to help them stay healthy and avoid costly complications.

- The capabilities provided by health IT are particularly critical for women who are not able to take time away from work to attend to their own health care needs or to the needs of those for whom they are caregivers. For many workers, every moment spent away from work jeopardizes their economic security and job stability; health IT helps to ease that burden.

Women as Mothers

- Health IT can be an important resource for women during pregnancy. Women can utilize mobile apps (i.e., Text4Baby) to get crucial information timed to their specific stages of pregnancy. For example, women in their first trimester may receive the message: "Morning sickness may be caused by a change in your hormones. Try eating crackers or dry cereal."

Meet Sofia

Sofia has three children. Using a PHR, Sofia can pull up her children's immunization records from a home computer and send them to their schools, after-school programs and sports programs – all without leaving home or even getting on the phone.

- Women are often the primary child care providers for their families. Health IT can ensure that women are up-to-date on their children's health care needs. Secure email enables women to ask health-related questions, share concerns and provide pertinent information to their children's doctors and providers. If health problems arise, mothers have a faster and easier way to communicate with their children's care team.

Women as Caregivers

- In addition to taking care of their children, women are often the

primary caregivers and chief care coordinators for their families. Women are 61 percent of the 44 million Americans who are caregivers to an elderly or disabled person. Health IT makes it easier to coordinate the care of multiple people. This is especially useful since women frequently care for their children at the same time they are caring for their aging parents, as well as themselves.

- Transitioning from one care setting to another can be one of the most perilous scenarios for vulnerable patients. Often key information is lost in the shuffle between different physicians, hospitals and/or home. Electronic sharing of care summaries helps to facilitate direct provider-to-provider communication, increase patient safety, reduce medical errors, improve outcomes and avoid unnecessary and duplicative services.

- Health IT also gives women an easy way to share the content of advance directives with their health care providers and loved ones. Should a patient be unable to speak for herself, an electronic advance directive can quickly inform providers and other caregivers of the woman's medical care preferences.

Meet Elizabeth

Elizabeth is the primary caregiver for her elderly mother. With health IT, Elizabeth is able to easily look up her mother's care plan and coordinate the care her mom receives from multiple doctors. Elizabeth receives electronic reminders to ensure that her mother does not miss a doctor's appointment.

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