

Protecting Your Health Information: What You Should Know

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Your health information is personal. This guide explains simple steps you can take to protect it, how to choose apps safely, and where to go if you have concerns.

1. How You Can Help Protect Your Health Information

Here are easy ways to keep your information safe:

- **Use strong passwords**
Choose passwords that are hard to guess. Avoid using names or birthdays.
 - **Keep your login details private**
Don't share your usernames or passwords with others.
 - **Use secure devices and networks**
Avoid accessing your health information on public Wi-Fi unless it's secure.
 - **Log out when finished**
Especially when using shared or public devices.
 - **Keep your devices updated**
Install updates for your phone, tablet, or computer to help protect against security risks.
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2. Using Health Apps: What to Consider

You may choose to use apps to view or manage your health information. Before you do, it's important to understand how your data may be used.

Things to look for:

- **Privacy policy**
Does the app clearly explain how your information is used and shared?
- **Data sharing practices**
Will the app share your data with other companies, like advertisers?
- **Security features**
Does the app use protections like encryption or login verification?
- **Secondary uses of data**
Some apps may use your data for purposes beyond your care, such as marketing or research.

Tip: If you're unsure, take time to review the app's privacy and security details before connecting it to your health information.

3. Who Protects Your Health Information?

Not all organizations that handle your health data are required to follow the same privacy laws.

Usually covered by HIPAA:

These groups must protect your health information under federal law:

- Health plans (like us)
- Doctors, hospitals, and clinics
- Pharmacies

Usually NOT covered by HIPAA:

These may not be required to follow the same rules:

- Health apps you download on your own
- Fitness trackers or wearable devices
- Some online services or websites

This means your information may not have the same protections once shared with certain apps or services.

4. Who Oversees Privacy and Security?

Two federal agencies help protect your information:

- **Office for Civil Rights (OCR)**
Enforces HIPAA privacy and security rules for covered health organizations
 - **Federal Trade Commission (FTC)**
Helps protect consumers from unfair or deceptive practices, including misuse of personal data by companies not covered by HIPAA
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5. How to File a Complaint

If you believe your health information has been misused or not properly protected, you can file a complaint.

Contact the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) if:

- A health plan, doctor, or hospital may have violated your privacy rights

How to file:

- Online: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/filing-a-complaint>
 - Phone: 1-800-368-1019
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Contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) if:

- A company (like a health app) misused your data or did not follow its privacy promises

How to file:

- Online: <https://reportfraud.ftc.gov>
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6. Need Help?

If you have questions about your health information or how to access it, please contact Member Services at 1-888-477-4663. We're here to help you understand your rights and options.

Remember: You are in control of your health information. Taking a few simple steps can help keep it safe.