

Patients can now get test results straight from the lab: HHS

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New rule still lets consumers access personal health information from their doctor.

(HealthDay)—Patients may now get their medical test results directly from the laboratory, without having to go through a doctor's office, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced Monday.

Updating the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988, the final rule allows labs to give [patients](#), people designated by patients or their "personal representatives" access to completed test reports on request, the federal agency said in a news release.

"The right to access personal health information is a cornerstone of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule," HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said in the news release.

"Information like lab results can empower patients to track their health progress, make decisions with their [health care professionals](#) and adhere

to important treatment plans."

Under the HIPAA rule, patients or their representatives can see or be given a copy of the patient's protected health information, including an electronic copy. The amended rules eliminate an exception to the 1996 rule that limited patients' access to their protected [health information](#) when held by certain labs, according to the news release.

Although patients can still access test reports from their doctors, "these changes give patients a new option to obtain their test reports directly from the laboratory while maintaining strong protections for patients' privacy," the HHS said.

Requests may have to be put in writing, and the patient or representative may have to cover the cost of copying or emailing the test, the release said. Copies must be given to patients within 30 days of the request, in most cases.

More information: You can see the final rule at the [U.S. Federal Register](#).

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