

What is Blue Button?

The Blue Button Initiative was created within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a way to improve veterans' access to their medical records. Today, Blue Button is used by the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and many private organizations. Although Blue Button is still in its early stages, it is expanding rapidly and is used by insurers, providers, and payers to offer consumers access to their health information.

Blue Button has become a service mark for many of users with its logo serving as a notice of accessibility. Blue Button allows consumers to request information from health care providers, health insurance companies, laboratories, and drugstores. Information that is accessible electronically includes lists of current medications, allergies, medical treatment information, lab test results, and health insurance claims information. Medicare uses Blue Button to make information available from 3 years of beneficiaries' health records. Medicare Blue Button also shares information about claims for services covered under Medicare Parts A and B and all drugs purchased under Part D. Veterans can access Blue Button via the [MyHealththeVet](#) website, where they can access demographic information, emergency contacts, prescription medications, clinical notes, and wellness reminders.

With Blue Button exists the Data Reconciliation Engine, or DRE. The DRE accepts health information in a variety of formats from multiple sources and consolidates that information from various systems into one easy to understand language, improving interoperability. The DRE allows consumers to check for duplicates and partial matches in their medical records, and also encourages consumers to incorporate new data or fix existing errors they may find. Not only does the DRE reconcile health information into one single master health record, it also allows patients to store the information.

The Blue Button Connector was one of the first open data sources delivered through an open application program interface (API). Blue Button makes transparent health data available to the individuals that are the subject of the information and, through the [Blue Button Connector](#), the public can find where else they might get their own health information. As companies and developers realize what electronic health data is being shared, a wide variety of health applications and tools that will help consumers understand and interact with their health information may be expected to arrive in consumers' computers, tablets, smartphones, and connected medical devices.

Find out if you can use Blue Button to access your health information: <http://bluebuttonconnector.healthit.gov/>. For more on the Blue Button Initiative, see our Myth Buster here: <http://www.healthinfolaw.org/article/myth-buster-every-provider-and-payer-provides-patient-records-electronically-through-blue-bu>

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