Passwordless: What it is (and why it's critical)

It's no secret that healthcare is a highly attractive target for cybercriminals, especially given the significant value of PHI. The good news? **Passwordless authentication makes it much harder for cybercriminals to gain access through phishing, stolen credentials, and brute force attacks.** Passwordless access also enhances operational efficiencies, especially amid growing requirements by IT and security teams for longer character passwords. Here's a snapshot of what it involves, and why it's so vital for healthcare organizations.

What it's about

Simply put, passwordless is focused on eliminating passwords for end users, and replacing them with more secure, user-friendly authentication methods. **In a nutshell, it's about simultaneously enhancing data security and reducing digital access friction for users**, especially clinicians who may log in and out of shared kiosks up to 80 times per shift.

80x
per shift
A clinician may log in and out of shared kiosks.

Healthcare use cases

A unique challenge faced by healthcare is the complex range of workflows and devices clinicians interact with on a day-to-day basis. That includes EHRs, EPCS, shared mobile and medical devices, and shared virtual desktops — plus cloud and legacy apps.

Passwordless authentication methods

More secure, clinician-friendly alternatives to passwords include a badge tap, a smartphone push token, biometric identification, a phishing-resistant FIDO passkey, and a PIN. Passwordless authentication should use a combination of two factors as a sound security practice. Yet, it's important to note that not all methods are appropriate for every workflow, so combinations must be selected according to workflow and clinician needs.

Setting priorities

Getting to passwordless starts with prioritizing workflows, apps, and user populations to target for initial passwordless roll-outs, and then phasing in the new authentication methods based on the greatest opportunity for benefits where systems can support them. Also essential to success is a change management strategy sharply focused on achieving clinician buy-in and adoption.

Want to know more? Check out our blog, "The journey to passwordless for healthcare: Considerations and practical advice."