

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES



Notice of Privacy Practices for Protected Health Information

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

This office is required by a federal regulation, known as the HIPAA Privacy Rule, to maintain the privacy of your health information and to provide you with notice of its legal duties and privacy practices. This office will not use or disclose your health information except as described in this Notice.

The office is permitted by federal privacy laws to make uses and disclosures of your health information for purposes of treatment, payment and health care operations. Protected health information is the information we create and obtain in providing our services to you. The health information about you is documented in a medical record and on a computer. Such information may include documenting your symptoms, medical history, examination and test results, diagnoses, treatment, and applying for future care or treatment. It also includes billing documents for those services.

Ways in Which We May Use and Disclose Your Protected Health Information:

The following paragraphs describe different ways that we use and disclose your protected health information. We have provided an example for each category, but these examples are not meant to be exhaustive. We assure you that all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose your health information fall within one of these categories.

Treatment. We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. We will also disclose your health information to other physicians who may be treating you. Additionally we may from time to time disclose your health information to another physician who we have requested to be involved in your care. *For example* – we would disclose your health information to a specialist to whom we have referred you for a diagnosis to help in your treatment.

Payment. We will use and disclose your protected health information to obtain payment for the health care services we provide you. *For example* – we may include information with a bill to a third-party payer that identifies you, your diagnosis, procedures performed, and supplies used in rendering the service.

Health Care Operations. We will use and disclose your protected health information to support the business activities of our practice. *For example* – we may use medical information about you to review and evaluate our treatment and services or to evaluate our staff's performance while caring for you. In addition, we may disclose your health information to third party business associates who perform billing, consulting, or transcription services for our practice.

Other Disclosures and Uses We Can Make Without Your Written Authorization

Notification of Family/Friends. Unless you object, we may use or disclose your protected health information to notify, or assist in notifying, a family member, personal representative, or other person responsible for your care, about your location, and about your general condition, or your death.

Communication with Family/Friends. Using our best judgment, we may disclose to a family member, other relative, close personal friend, or any other person you identify, health information relevant to that person's involvement in your care or in payment for such care if you do not object or in an emergency.

Disaster Relief. We may use and disclose your health information to assist in disaster relief efforts.

Employers. We may release health information about you to your employer if we provide health care services to you at the request of your employer, and the health care services are provided either to conduct an evaluation relating to medical surveillance of the workplace or to evaluate whether you have a work-related illness or injury. In such circumstances, we will give you written notice of such release of information to your employer. Any other disclosures to your employer will be made only if you execute an authorization for the release of that information to your employer.

Deceased Persons. We may disclose your health information to funeral directors, medical examiners, or coroners consistent with applicable law to allow them to carry out their duties. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also release health information about patients to funeral directors as necessary for them to carry out their duties.

Organ Procurement Organizations. Consistent with applicable law, we may disclose your health information to organ procurement organizations or other entities engaged in the procurement, banking, or transplantation of organs for the purpose of tissue donation and transplant.

Appointment Reminders, Marketing and Treatment Alternatives. We may contact you to provide you with appointment reminders, with information about treatment alternatives, or with information about other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you. We may also encourage you to purchase a product or service when we see you. We will not disclose your health information without your written authorization.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA). We may disclose to the FDA your health information relating to adverse events with respect to food, supplements, products and product defects, or post-marketing surveillance information to enable product recalls, repairs, or replacements.

Workers' Compensation. If you are seeking compensation through Workers' Compensation, we may disclose your health information to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to Workers' Compensation.

Public Health. As required by law, we may disclose your health information to public health or legal authorities charged with preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability; to report reactions to medications or problems with products; to notify people of recalls; to notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or who is at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition.

Abuse, Neglect & Domestic Violence. We may disclose your health information to public authorities as allowed by law to report abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.

Sign In Sheet. We may use and disclose your health information by having you sign in when you arrive at our office. We may also call out your name when we are ready to see you.

Inmates. If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement officer, we may disclose to the institution or law enforcement official health information necessary for your health and the health and safety of other individuals.

Law Enforcement. We may disclose your health information for law enforcement purposes as required by law, such as when required by a court order; for identification of a victim of a crime if certain protective requirements are met; to report a crime on our premises; to report crime in emergencies; and other appropriate situations permitted by law.

Health Oversight. We may disclose your health information to appropriate health oversight agencies or for health oversight activities.

Judicial/Administrative Proceedings. We may disclose your health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding as allowed or required by law or as directed by a proper court order or in response to a subpoena, with your authorization, discovery request or other lawful process if certain specific requirements are met.

Serious Threat. To avert a serious threat to health or safety, we may disclose your health information consistent with applicable law to prevent or lessen a serious, imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public.

For Specialized Governmental Functions. We may disclose your health information for specialized government functions as authorized by law such as to Armed Forces personnel, for national security purposes, or to public assistance program personnel.

Other Uses. Other uses and disclosures of your health information besides those identified in this Notice will be made only as otherwise authorized by law or with your written authorization and you may revoke the authorization as previously provided in this Notice.

Research. We may disclose your health information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information.

Your Health Information Rights

The health and billing records we maintain are the physical property of the doctor's office. The information in it, however, belongs to you. You have a right to:

- Request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your health information by delivering the request in writing to our office – we are not required to grant the request but we will comply with any request granted;
- Obtain a paper copy of the Notice of Privacy Practices for Protected Health Information (“Notice”) by making a request at our office;
- Request that you be allowed to inspect and copy your medical record and billing record – you may exercise the rights by delivering the request in writing to our office using the form we provide to you upon request;
- Appeal a denial of access to your protected health information except in certain circumstances;
- Request that your medical record be amended to correct incomplete or incorrect information by delivering a written request, including a reason to support it, to our office using the form we provide to you upon request. (We are not required to make such amendments);
- File a statement of disagreement if your amendment is denied, and require that the request for amendment and any denial be attached in all future disclosures of your protected health information;
- Obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information as required to be maintained by law by delivering a written request to our office using the form we provide to you upon request. An accounting will not include uses and disclosures of information for treatment, payment, or health care operations; disclosures or uses made to you or made at your request; uses or disclosures made pursuant to an authorization signed by you; or to family members or friends or uses relevant to that persons involvement in your care or in payment for such care; or uses or disclosures to notify family or others responsible for your care or your location, condition, or your death; we may charge a cost-based fee for more than accounting in a 12-month period.
- Request that confidential communication of your health information be made by alternative means or at an alternative location by delivering the request in writing to our office using the form we provide to you upon request; and,
- Revoke authorization that you made previously to use or disclose information except to the extent information or action has already been taken by delivering a written revocation to our office.

If you want to exercise any of the above rights, please contact our Privacy Officer (ph# (860) 231-8345 or (860) 285-8251), in person or in writing, during normal business hours. Our Privacy Officer will provide you with assistance on the steps to take to exercise your rights.

You have the right to review this Notice before signing the acknowledgment authorizing use and disclosure of your protected health information for treatment, payment, and health care operations purposes.

Our Responsibilities

The office is required to:

- Maintain the privacy of your health information as required by law;
- Provide you with a notice as to our duties and privacy practices as to the information we collect and maintain about you;
- Abide by the terms of this Notice;
- Notify you if we cannot accommodate a requested restriction or request; and
- Accommodate your reasonable request regarding methods to communicate health information with you.

We reserve the right to amend, change, or eliminate provisions in our privacy practices and access practices and to enact new provisions regarding the protected health information we maintain. If our information practices change, we will amend our Notice. You are entitled to receive a revised copy of the Notice by calling and requesting a copy of our “Notice” or by visiting our office and picking up a copy.

To Request Information or File a Complaint

If you have questions, would like additional information, want to report a problem regarding the handling of your information, or if you believe your privacy rights have been violated and wish to file a written complaint with our office, please contact our Privacy Officer (Ph# (860) 231-8345 or (860) 285-8251). You may also file a complaint by mailing it or e-mailing it to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

- We cannot, and will not, require you to waive your rights under the Privacy Rule including the right to file a complaint with the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) as a condition of receiving treatment from the office.
- We cannot, and will not, retaliate against you for filing a complaint with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

For More Information

If you have questions or would like additional information, you may contact our office manager at (860) 231-8345 or (860) 285-8251.