

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.

PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY

The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996 (“HIPAA”) is a federal program that requires that all medical records and other individually identifiable health information used or disclosed by us in any form, whether electronically, on paper, or orally are kept properly confidential. This Act gives you, the patient, significant new rights to understand and control how your health information is used. HIPAA provides penalties for covered entities that misuse personal health information.

As required by HIPAA, we have prepared this explanation of how we are to maintain the privacy of your health information and how we may disclose your health information.

We may use and disclose your medical records only for each of the following purposes: treatment, payment and health care operations.

- Treatment means providing, coordinating, or managing health care and related services by one or more healthcare providers. An example of this would include referring you to a retinal specialist.
- Payment means such activities as obtaining reimbursement for services, confirming coverage, billing or collection activities, and utilization review. An example of this would include sending your insurance company a bill for your visit and/or verifying coverage prior to a surgery.
- Health Care Operations includes business aspects of running our practice, such as conducting quality assessments and improving activities, auditing functions, cost management analysis, and customer service. An example of this would be new patient survey cards.

We may also create and distribute de-identified health information by removing all references to individually identifiable information.

We may contact you, by phone or in writing, to provide appointment reminders or information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

Any other uses and disclosures will be made only with your written authorization. You may revoke such authorization in writing and we are required to honor and abide by that

written request, except to the extent that we have already taken actions relying on your authorization.

You have the following rights with respect to your protected health information, which you can exercise by presenting a written request to the Compliance Officer.

- The right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of protected health information, including those related to disclosures of family members, other relative, close personal friends, or any other person identified by you. We are, however, not required to honor a requested restriction. If we do agree to the restriction, we must abide by it unless you agree in writing to remove it.
- The right to reasonable requests to receive confidential communications of protected health information by alternative means or at alternative locations.
- The right to inspect and copy your protected health information.
- The right to amend your protected health information.
- The right to receive and accounting of disclosures of your protected health information.
- The right to obtain a paper copy of this notice from us upon request.

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your protected health information and to provide you the notice of our legal duties and our privacy practices with respect to protected health information.

This notice is effective as of April 7, 2003, and we are required to abide by the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices currently in effect. We reserve the right to change the terms of our Notice of Privacy Practice and to make the new notice provisions effective for all protected health information that we maintain. We will post and you may request a written copy of the revised Notice of Privacy Practices from the office.

You have recourse if you feel that your privacy protections have been violated. You have the right to file a formal, written complaint with our office or with the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights, about the violations of the provisions of this notice or the policies and procedures of our office. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

Feel free to contact the Compliance Officer for more information, in person or in writing. For more information about HIPAA or to file a complaint:

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Office of Civil Rights

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