

Summary of Notice of Privacy Practices

A new federal law known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 ("HIPAA") goes into force on April 14, 2003. We are required to give you a printed copy of our Notice of Privacy Practices. For your convenience, we are providing this brief summary. Each section has a corresponding section in our full Notice, which we encourage you to read in its entirety. We are required to ask you to sign a one-time acknowledgment that you have received our full Notice. (That acknowledgment is on the first page of this document.)

Your Rights as a Patient. You have many new and important rights with respect to your protected health information. These are summarized below and described in detail in our full Notice of Privacy Practices.

Use of Protected Health Information. We are permitted to use your protected health information for treatment purposes, to facilitate our being paid, and to conduct our business and evaluate the quality and efficiency of our processes. Also, we are permitted to disclose protected health information under specific circumstances to other entities. We have put into place safeguards to protect the privacy of your health information. However, there may be incidental disclosures of limited information, such as overhearing a conversation, that occur in the course of authorized communications, routine treatment, payment, or the operations of our practice. HIPAA recognizes that such disclosures may be extremely difficult to avoid entirely, and considers them as permissible.

For entities that are not covered under HIPAA to which we must send protected health information for treatment, payment, or operational purposes, we require that they sign a contract in which they agree to protect the confidentiality of this information.

Disclosures of Protected Health Information Requiring Your Authorization. For disclosures that are not related to treatment, payment, or operations, we will obtain your specific written consent, except as described below.

Disclosures of Protected Health Information Not Requiring Your Authorization. We are required by state and federal law to make disclosures of certain protected health information without obtaining your authorization. Examples include mandated reporting of conditions affecting public health, subpoenas, and other legal requests.

Communication to You of Confidential Information by Alternative Means. If you make a written request, we will communicate confidential information to you by reasonable alternative means, or to an alternative address.

Restrictions to Use and Disclosure. You may request restrictions to the use or disclosure of your protected health information, but we are not required by HIPAA to agree to such requests. However, if we do agree, then we are bound to honor your request. In the course of our use and disclosure of your protected health information, only the minimum amount of such information will be used to accomplish the intended goal.

Access to Protected Health Information. You may request access to or a copy of your medical records in writing. We will provide these within the time period specified, unless we are forbidden under HIPAA or by applicable state law to provide such records. If we deny access, we will tell you why. You may appeal this decision, which, under specified circumstances, will be reviewed by a third party not involved in the denial.

Amendments to Medical Records. You may request in writing that corrections be made to your medical records. We will either accept the amendments, and notify appropriate parties, or deny your request with an explanation. You have rights to dispute such denials and have your objections noted in your medical record.

Accounting of Disclosures of Protected Health Information. You may request in writing an accounting of disclosures of your protected health information. This accounting excludes disclosures made in the course of treatment, payment, or operations, and disclosures that were made as a result of your written authorization.

Other Uses of Your Health Information. Optional uses, as permitted under HIPAA, are listed in our complete Notice of Privacy Practices.

How to Lodge Complaints Related to Perceived Violations of Your Privacy Rights. You may register a complaint about any of our privacy practices with our Privacy Official or with the Secretary of Health and Human Services without fear of retaliation, coercion, or intimidation.