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## Notice of Privacy Practices

As Required by the Privacy Regulations Created as a result of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

Please contact us if you have any questions.

### COMMITMENT TO YOUR PRIVACY

Our practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your individually identifiable health information (IIHI). In conducting our business, we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide to you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies you. We also are required by law to provide you with this notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices that we maintain in our practice concerning your IIHI. By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the notice of privacy practices that we have in effect at the time. We realize that these laws are complicated, but we must provide you with the following important information:

- Use and disclose your IIHI
- Your privacy rights in regard to your IIHI
- Circumstances that may obligate us in the use and disclosure of your IIHI

The terms of this notice apply to all records containing your IIHI that are created or retained by our practice. We reserve the right to revise or amend this Notice of Privacy Practices. Any revision or amendment to this notice will be effective for all of your records that our practice has created or maintained in the past, and for any of your records that we may create or maintain in the future. Our practice will post a copy of our current Notice in our offices in a visible location at all times, and you may request a copy of our most current Notice at any time.

### USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR IIHI:

The following categories describe the different ways in which we may use and disclose your IIHI.

**1. Treatment.** Our practice may use your IIHI to treat you. For example, we may ask you to have laboratory tests (such as blood or urine tests), and we may use the results to help us reach a diagnosis. We might use your IIHI in order to write a prescription for you, or we might disclose your IIHI to a pharmacy when we order a prescription for you. Many of the people who work for our practice - including, but not limited to, our doctors and nurses - may use or disclose your IIHI to treat you or

to assist others in your treatment. Additionally, we may disclose your IIHI to others who may assist in your care, such as your spouse, children or parents.

**2. Payment.** Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI in order to bill and collect payment for the services and items you may receive from us. For example, we may contact your health insurer to certify that you are eligible for benefits (and for what range of benefits), and we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover, or pay for, your treatment. We also may use and disclose your IIHI to obtain payment from third parties that may be responsible for such costs, such as family members. Also, we may use your IIHI to bill you directly for services and items.

**3. Health Care Operations.** Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI to operate our business. As examples of the ways in which we may use and disclose your information for our operations, our practice may use your IIHI to evaluate the quality of care you received from us, or to conduct cost-management and business planning activities for our practice.

**4. Appointment Reminders.** Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment.

**5. Treatment Options.** Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI to inform you of potential treatment options or alternatives.

**6. Health-Related Benefits and Services.** Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI to inform you of health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

**7. Release of Information to Family/Friends.** Our practice may release your IIHI to a friend or family member that is involved in your care, or who assists in taking care of you. For example, a parent or guardian may ask that a babysitter take their child to the pediatrician's office for treatment of a cold. In this example, the babysitter may have access to this child's medical information.

**8. Disclosures Required By Law.** Our practice will use and disclose your IIHI when we are required to do so by federal, state, or local law.

## **YOUR PRIVACY RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR IIHI**

You have the following rights regarding the IIHI that we maintain about you:

**1. Confidential Communications:** You have the right to request that our practice communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular manner or at a certain location. For instance, you may ask that we contact you at home, rather than work. In order to request a type of confidential communication, you must make a written request.

**2. Inspection and Copies.** You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the IIHI that may be used to make decisions about you, including patient medical records and billing records, but not including psychotherapy notes. You must submit your request in writing. Our practice may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, labor and supplies associated with your request. Our practice may deny your request to inspect and/or copy in certain limited circumstances; however, you may request a review of our denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by us will conduct reviews.

**3. Amendment.** You may ask us to amend your health information if you believe it is incorrect or incomplete, and you may request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our practice. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing. We may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that is in our opinion: (a) accurate and complete; (b) not part of the IIHI

kept by or for the practice; (c) not part of the IIHI which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or (d) not created by our practice, unless the individual or entity that created the information is not available to amend the information.

## **CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY OBLIGATE US IN THE USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR IIHI**

The following categories describe unique scenarios in which we may use or disclose your identifiable health information:

**1. Public Health Risks.** Our practice may disclose your IIHI to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information for the purpose of:

- maintaining vital records, such as births and deaths
- reporting child abuse or neglect
- preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability
- notifying a person regarding potential exposure to a communicable disease
- notifying a person regarding a potential risk for spreading or contracting a disease or condition
- reporting reactions to drugs or problems with products or devices
- notifying individuals if a product or device they may be using has been recalled
- notifying appropriate government agency(ies) and authority(ies) regarding the potential abuse or neglect of an adult patient (including domestic violence); however, we will only disclose this information if the patient agrees we are required or authorized by law to disclose this information
- notifying your employer under limited circumstances related primarily to workplace injury or illness or medical surveillance

**2. Health Oversight Activities.** Our practice may disclose your IIHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. Oversight activities can include, for example, investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil, administrative and criminal procedures or actions; or other activities necessary for the government to monitor government programs, compliance with civil rights laws and the health care system in general.

**3. Lawsuits and Similar Proceedings.** Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We also may disclose your IIHI in response to a discovery request, subpoena, or other lawful process by another party involved in the dispute, but only if we have made an effort to inform you of the request or to obtain an order protecting the information the party has requested.

**4. Law Enforcement.** We may release IIHI if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:

- Regarding a crime victim in certain situations, if we are unable to obtain the person's agreement
- Concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct
- Regarding criminal conduct at our offices
- In response to a warrant, summons, court order, subpoena, or similar legal process
- To identify/locate a suspect, material witness, fugitive or missing person
- In an emergency, to report a crime (including the location or victim(s) of the crime, or the description, identity or location of the perpetrator)

**5. Deceased Patients.** Our Practice may release IIHI to a medical examiner or coroner to identify a deceased individual or to identify the cause of death. If necessary, we also may release information in order for funeral directors to perform

their job.

**6. Organ and Tissue Donation.** Our Practice may release IIHI to organizations that handle organ, eye, or tissue procurement or transplantation, including organ, donation banks as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation if you are an organ donor.

**7. Research.** Our Practice may use and disclose your IIHI for research purposes in certain limited circumstances. We will obtain your written authorization to use your IIHI for research purposes except when: (a) our use or disclosure was approved by an Institutional Review Board or a Privacy Board; (b) we obtain the oral or written agreement of a researcher that (i) the information being sought is necessary for the research study; (ii) the use or disclosure of your IIHI is being used only for the research and (iii) the researcher will not remove any of your IIHI from our practice; or (c) the IIHI sought by the researcher only relates to descendants and the researcher agrees either orally or in writing that the use or disclosure is necessary for the research and, if we request it, to provide us with proof of death prior to access to the IIHI of the decedents.

**8. Serious Threats to Health or Safety.** Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI when necessary to reduce or prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.

**9. Military.** Our practice may disclose your IIHI if you are a member of U.S. or foreign military forces (including veterans) and if required by the appropriate authorities.

**10. National Security.** Our practice may disclose your IIHI to federal officials for intelligence and national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose your IIHI to federal officials in order to protect the President, other officials, or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.

**11. Inmates.** Our practice may disclose your IIHI to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials if you are an inmate or under the custody of a law enforcement official. Disclosure for these purposes would be necessary: (a) for the institution to provide health care services to you, (b) for the safety and security of the institution, and/or to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of other individuals.

**12. Workers' Compensation.** Our practice may release your IIHI for workers' compensation and similar program