

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

This notice of privacy practices ('notice') describes how we may use or disclose your health information and how you can get access to such information. Please read it carefully. Your 'health information,' for purposes of this Notice, is generally any information that identifies you and is created, received, maintained, or transmitted by us in the course of providing health care items or services to you (referred to as 'health information' in this Notice.)

We are required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and other applicable laws to maintain the privacy of your health information, to provide individuals with this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to such information, and to abide by the terms of this Notice. We are also required by law to notify affected individuals following a breach of their unsecured health information.

USES AND DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION

The most common reasons why we use or disclose your health information are for treatment, payment, or health care operations. Examples of how we use or disclose your health information for treatment purposes are: setting up an appointment for you; testing or examining your eyes; prescribing glasses, contact lenses, or eye medications and faxing them to be filled; showing you low vision aids; referring you to another doctor or clinic for eye care or low vision aids or services; or getting copies of your health information from another professional that you may have seen before us. Examples of how we use or disclose your health information for health care operations are: financial or billing audits; internal quality assurance; personnel decisions; participation in managed care plans; defense of legal matters; business planning; and outside storage of our records.

OTHER DISCLOSURES AND USES WE MAY MAKE WITHOUT YOUR AUTHORIZATION OR CONSENT

In some limited situations, the law allows or requires us to use or disclose your health information without your consent or authorization. Not all of these situations will apply to us; some may never come up at our office at all. Such uses or disclosures are:

- When a state or deferral law mandates that certain health information be reported for a specific purpose;
- For public health purposes, such as contagious disease reporting, investigation or surveillance; and notices to and from the federal Food and Drug Administration regarding drugs or medical devices
- Disclosures to governmental authorities about victims of suspected abuse, neglect, or domestic violence
- Uses and disclosures for health oversight activities, such as for the licensing of doctors; for audits by Medicare and Medicaid; or for investigation of possible violations of health care laws
- Disclosures for judicial and administrative proceedings, such as in response to subpoenas or orders of courts or administrative agencies
- Disclosures for law enforcement purposes, such as to provide information about someone who is or is suspected to be a victim of a crime; to provide information about a crime at our office; or to report a crime that happened somewhere else
- Disclosure to a medical examiner to identify a dead person or to determine the cause of death; or to funeral directors to aid in burial; or to organizations that handle organ or tissue donations;
- Uses or disclosures for health related research
- Uses and disclosures to prevent a serious threat to health or safety
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- Uses or disclosures for specialized government functions, such as for the protection of the president or high ranking government officials; for lawful national intelligence activities; for military purposes; or for the evaluation and health of members of the foreign service;
- Disclosures of de-identified information
- Disclosures relating to worker's compensation programs
- Disclosures of a 'limited data set' for research, public health, or health care operations
- Incidental disclosures that are an unavoidable by-product of permitted uses or disclosures;
- Disclosures to 'business associates' and their subcontractors who perform health care operations for us and who commit to respect the privacy of your health information in accordance with HIPAA
- (specify other uses and disclosures affected by state law)

Unless you object, we will also share relevant information about your care with any of your personal representatives who are helping you with your eye care. Upon your death, we may disclose to your family members or to other persons who were involved in your care or payment for health care prior to your death (such as your personal representative) health information relevant to their involvement in your care unless doing so is inconsistent with your preferences as expressed to us prior to your death.

SPECIFIC USES AND DISCLOSURES OF INFORMATION REQUIRING YOUR AUTHORIZATION

The following are some specific uses and disclosures we may not make of your health information without your authorization:

Marketing activities: We must obtain your authorization prior to using or disclosing any of your health information for marketing purposes unless such marketing communications take the form of face-to-face communications we may make with individuals or promotional gifts of nominal value that we may provide. If such marketing involves financial payment to us from a third party your authorization must also include consent to such payment.

Sale of health information: We do not currently sell or plan to sell your health information and we must seek your authorization prior to doing so.

Psychotherapy notes: Although we do not create or maintain psychotherapy notes on our patients, we are required to notify you that we generally must obtain your authorization prior to using or disclosing any such notes.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PROVIDE AN AUTHORIZATION FOR OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES

- Other uses and disclosures of your health information that are not described in this Notice will be made only with your written authorization.
- You may give us written authorization permitting us to use your health information that are not identified in this Notice or are not otherwise permitted by applicable law
- We must agree to your request to restrict disclosure of your health information to a health plan if the disclosure is for the purpose of carrying out payment or health care operations and is not otherwise required by law and such information pertains solely to a health care item or service for which you have paid in full (or for which another person other than the health plan has paid in full on your behalf)

Any authorization you provide to us regarding the use and disclosure of your health information may be revoked by you in writing at any time. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your health information for the reasons described in the authorization. However, we are generally unable to retract any disclosures that we may have already made with your authorization. We may also be required to disclose health information as necessary for purposes of payment for services received by you prior to the date you revoked your authorization.

YOUR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

You have many rights concerning the confidentiality of your health information. You have the right:

- To request restrictions on the health information we may use and disclose for treatment, payment, and health care operations. We are not required to agree to these requests. To request restrictions, please send a written request to us at the address below.
- To receive confidential communications of health information about you in any manner other than described in our authorization request form. You must make such requests in writing to the address below. However, we reserve the right to determine if we will be able to continue your treatment under such restrictive authorizations.
- To inspect or copy your health information. You must make such requests in writing. If you request a copy of your health information we may charge you a fee for the cost of copying, mailing, or other supplies. In certain circumstances, we may deny your request to inspect or copy your health information, subject to applicable law.