

# **NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES**

As required by the Privacy Regulations created by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA),

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU (AS A PATIENT OF THIS PRACTICE) MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GAIN ACCESS TO YOUR INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION.

## **PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY**

### **A. OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR PRIVACY:**

Our practice is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your Protected Health Information (PHI). Protected Health Information is defined as individually identifiable health information. In conducting our business, we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies you. We are required by law to provide you with the notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices that we maintain in our practice concerning your PHI. 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 information:

- How we may use and disclose your PHI
- Your privacy rights regarding your PHI
- Our obligations concerning the use and disclosure of your PHI

The terms of this notice apply to all records containing your PHI 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 of Privacy Practices in our offices(s) in visible locations at all times, as well as on our website at [www.charlestonobgyn.com](http://www.charlestonobgyn.com). You may request a copy of our most current Notice at any time.

**B. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NOTICE, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Charleston Ob/Gyn at 1027 Physicians Drive, Charleston, SC 29414 telephone 843-740-6700

**C. WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PHI IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:**

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

1. **Treatment.** We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. This includes the coordination or management of your health care with a third party. 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. For example, your protected health information may be provided to a physician to whom you have been referred to ensure that the physician has the necessary information to diagnose or treat you.
2. **Payment.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI 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 we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover, or pay for, your treatment.
3. **Healthcare Operations.** Our practice may use and disclose, as needed, your PHI to operate our business. These activities include, but are not limited to, evaluation of the quality of care you received from us, training of students, licensing, and to conduct cost-management and business planning activities for our practice. For example, we may disclose your protected health information to medical school students, nurse practitioner students, or physician assistant students that see patients at our office. In addition, we may use a sign-in sheet at the registration desk where you will be asked to sign your name and indicate your physician. We may also call you by name in the waiting room when your physician is ready to see you. We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to contact you to remind you of your appointment.
4. **Appointment Reminders.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment.
5. **Disclosures Required By Law.** Our practice will use and disclose your PHI when we are required to do so by federal, state or local law.

**D. USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR PHI IN CERTAIN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:**

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 PHI to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information.
2. **Health Oversight Activities.** Our practice may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These situations include: investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil, administrative, and criminal procedures or actions.
3. **Lawsuits and Similar Proceedings.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We also may disclose your PHI 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 PHI if: asked to do so by a law enforcement official regarding a crime, a crime victim or concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct.
5. **Deceased Patients.** Our practice may release PHI 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 jobs.
6. **Research.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI for research purposes in certain limited circumstances. We will obtain your written authorization to use your PHI 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 (1) the information being sought is necessary for the research study; (ii) the use or disclosure of your PHI is being used only for the research and (iii) the researcher will not remove any of your PHI from our practice; or (c) the PHI sought by the researcher only relates to decedents 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 PHI of the decedents.
7. **Serious Threats to Health or Safety.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI when necessary to reduce or prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of an individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.
8. **National Security.** Our practice may disclose your PHI to federal officials for national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose your PHI to federal officials in order to protect the President, other officials or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.
9. **Inmates.** Our practice may disclose your PHI 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 (c) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of other individuals.

#### E. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PHI:

You have the following rights regarding the PHI 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. To request a confidential communication, you must make a written request to Charleston Ob/Gyn (address and phone number listed above) specifying the request. Our practice will accommodate reasonable requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.
2. Requesting Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment or health care operations. Additionally, you have the right to request that we restrict our disclosure of your PHI to only certain individuals involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and friends. We are not required to agree to your request; however, if we agree, we are bound by our agreement except when otherwise required by law, in emergencies, or when the information is necessary to treat you. In order to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI, you must make your request in writing to Charleston Ob/Gyn (address and phone number listed above). Your request must describe in a clear and concise fashion: (a) the information you wish restricted; (b) whether you are requesting to limit our practice's use, disclosure or both; and (c) to whom you want the limits to apply.
3. Inspection and Copies. You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the PHI 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 to Charleston Ob/Gyn (address and phone number listed above) in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your PHI. 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.
4. 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 and submitted to Charleston Ob/Gyn, ATTN: Privacy Officer (address and phone number listed above). You must provide us with a reason that supports your request for amendment. Our practice will deny your request if you fail to submit your request (and the reason supporting your request) in writing. Also, 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 PHI kept by or for the practice; (c) not part of the JIFU 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.
5. Accounting of Disclosures. All of our patients have the right to request an "accounting of disclosures." An "accounting of disclosures" is a list of certain non-routine disclosures our practice has made of your PHI for non-treatment or operations purposes. Use of your PHI as part of the routine patient care in our practice is not required to be documented. For example, the doctor sharing information with the nurse; or the billing department

using your information to file your insurance claim. In order to obtain an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to Charleston Ob/Gyn, ATTN: Privacy Officer (address and phone number listed above). All requests for an accounting of disclosures" must state a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years from the date of disclosure and may not include dates before April 14, 2003.

6. The first list you request within a 12-month period is free of charge, but our practice may charge you for additional lists within the same 12-month period. Our practice will notify you of the costs involved with additional requests, and you may withdraw your request before you incur any costs.
7. Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice. You are entitled to receive a paper copy of our notice of privacy practices. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice contact Charleston Ob/Gyn (address and phone number listed above).
8. Right to File a Complaint. If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our practice or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our practice, contact Charleston Ob/Gyn, ATTN: Privacy Officer (address and phone number listed above). All complaints must be submitted in writing. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.
9. Right to Provide an Authorization for Other Uses and Disclosures. Our practice will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures that are not identified by this notice or permitted by applicable law. Any authorization you provide to us regarding your PHI may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your PHI for the reasons described in the authorization. Please note that we are required to retain records of your care.

Again, if you have any questions regarding this notice or our health information privacy policies, please contact Charleston Ob/Gyn (address and phone number listed above).

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