

## **PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION**

### **\*What you need to know about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act\***

Identify theft. Credit card fraud. Computer viruses. Concern for the privacy and security of personal information has never been greater. Our concern for the safety and security of your personal healthcare information has never been taken more seriously.

While we have always gone to great lengths to ensure the privacy of your personal health information, we will soon be getting additional help from the Federal government in the form of new regulations. These regulations will help standardize privacy and security requirements across the country and across all different type of healthcare organizations.

#### **New Regulations Passed-**

These regulations are part of the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, HIPAA for short. HIPAA does three primary things:

- 1. It helps standardize and simplify the way healthcare organizations exchange electronic healthcare data.**
- 2. It provides consumers with additional protections for getting and maintaining health insurance coverage, although, it does not guarantee coverage.**
- 3. It creates new security rules to ensure the safety and privacy of individual health information and medical records.**

**HIPAA Ensures the Privacy and Security of Individual Health Information-** Currently, individual state laws govern the use and disclosure of this information, creating many inconsistencies and gaps in the way you health information is protected. HIPAA sets minimum security and privacy standards for healthcare organizations to follow. If a state has more stringent privacy and security laws, then those would be followed instead. In addition, HIPAA sets heavy penalties for violations of these standards and the misuse of personal health information.

#### **Defining Individual Health Information-**

Every time you go to see a doctor, or admitted to the hospital, fill a prescription or send a claim to an insurance company, a record is made of your confidential health information. This type of information is referred to as individually identifiable health information and is the type of information regulated by HIPAA. It can be in any formation-electronic, paper or oral.

Healthcare organizations that collect and manage this type of information and are therefore covered by these regulations including physicians, physical therapists, mental health professionals, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, podiatrists, and others; hospitals, health plans, employers, healthcare clearinghouses such as claims processors; and other healthcare organizations who conduct administrative and financial transactions.

#### **Added Control over Health Information-**

**Under HIPAA, you have new rights to understand and control how your health information is used:**

- **Right to Education**-Healthcare providers and health plans are required to provide you with a clear written explanation of how they intend to use and disclose your information.
- **Right to Access Medical Records**-You have the right to see and get copies of your medical records, request changes and receive a history of non-routine disclosures of your personal health information.
- **Right of Consent**-Healthcare providers are required to obtain prior consent before sharing personal health information for purposes other than treatment, payment and healthcare operations.
- **Right to Recourse**-You have the right to file a formal complaint if you believe that violations of the regulations were made.

In general, HIPAA tries to find a balance between protecting your privacy and allowing the appropriate flow of information between healthcare providers that is necessary for you to access care and receive quality healthcare services.

The following websites may also contain helpful information on HIPAA:

**American Medical Association-<http://www.ama-assn.org/>**

**American Dental Association-<http://www.ada.org/>**

**American Chiropractic Association-<http://www.amerchiro.org/>**

**American Optometric Association-<http://www.aoanet.org/>**

**American Podiatric Medical Association-<http://www.apma.org/>**

**American Academy of Ophthalmology-<http://www.aao.org/>**



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I have been given the HIPAA Pamphlet regarding the protection of my medical records.

At the time of my original visit at this office, I received the patient handbook.

I understand that if I should have any questions regarding my medical records, the protection thereof and /or any issues of concern, I may speak to the office manager.

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_