

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

IOWA EYE, P.C.

1650 First Avenue N.E.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402

(Effective Date April 14, 2003)

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

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.

PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.

A. OUR 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:

- How we may use and disclose your IIHI
- Your privacy rights in your IIHI
- Our obligations concerning 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.

B. WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR INDIVIDUALLY IDENTIFIABLE HEALTH INFORMATION (IIHI) IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS

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 in order 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. Finally, we may also disclose your IIHI to other health care providers for purposes related to your treatment. We will disclose any mental health information, including psychotherapy notes, AIDS or HIV-related information, or drug treatment information, that we may have about you only with written authorization as required by Iowa law, HIPAA and other federal regulations.

During the course of your treatment, we may refer you to other health care providers such as independent laboratories with which you may not have direct patient contact. These providers are called “indirect treatment providers.” “Indirect treatment providers” are required to comply with the privacy requirements of state and federal law and keep your medical information confidential.

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. We may disclose your IIHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in their billing and collection efforts.

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. We may disclose your IIHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in their health care operations.

4. Appointment Reminders. Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment or that you are due to receive periodic care from the Practice. This contact may be by phone, in writing or otherwise and may involve leaving a message on an answering machine which could (potentially) be received or intercepted by others.

5. Treatment Options. Our practice may use and disclose your IIHI to inform you of potential treatment options or alternatives. However, we will not use or disclose medical information to market other products and services, either ours or those of third parties, without your authorization.

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, we may also give medical information, including prescription information or information concerning your appointments to friends who are involved in your care. We may also give such information to someone who helps pay for your care. In addition, we may disclose medical information about you to any entity assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status and location.

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.

C. USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR IIHI IN CERTAIN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

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

1. To Business Associates. The Iowa Eye Center from time to time will hire consultants called “business associates,” who render services to us. We may disclose your medical information to such business associates without your consent or authorization. Business associates are required to maintain and comply with the privacy requirements of state and federal law and keep your medical information confidential. Examples of “business associates” are accounting firms that we hire to perform audits of billing and payment information, and computer software vendors who assist us in maintaining and processing medical information.

2. 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 or 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. Law Enforcement. We may release IHI 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)

6. Deceased Patients. Our practice may release IHI 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.

7. Organ and Tissue Donation. Our practice may release your IHI 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.

8. Research. From time to time we participate in research studies with entities such as drug companies. Before we use or disclose medical information for research, the project will have been approved through a research approval process required by federal law. We may disclose medical information about you to people preparing to conduct a research project, for example, to help them look for patients with specific permission if the researcher will have access to your name, address or other information that reveals who you are. We will also comply with all other requirements under federal law to seek your written authorization to disclose protected health information in connection with research studies.

9. Serious Threats to Health or Safety. Our practice may use and disclose your IHI 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.

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

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

12. Inmates. Our practice may disclose your IHI 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.

13. Workers' Compensation. We may release medical information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs without consent or authorization. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses. For example, if you are injured on the job, we may release information regarding that specific injury.

D. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR IHI

You have the following rights regarding the IHI 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 to [Practice Manager, 1650 First Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402] specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. 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 IHI for treatment, payment or health care operations. Additionally, you have the right to request that we restrict our disclosure of your IHI to only certain individuals involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and friends. For example, you may request that your spouse or child who is involved in your care not receive certain information about your condition. **We are not required to agree to your request;** however, if we do 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 IHI, you must make your request in writing to [Practice Manager, 1650 First Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402]. 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 IHI 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 [Practice Manager, 1650 First Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402, (319) 362-3937] in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your IHI. 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. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.

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 [Practice Manager, 1650 First Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402]. 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 IHI kept by or for the practice; (c) not part of the IHI 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 IHI for non-treatment, non-payment or non-operations purposes. Use of your IHI 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 [Practice Manager, 1650 First Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402]. 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. 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.

6. 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 [Medical Records Dept., (319) 362-3937].

7. 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 [Practice Manager, (319) 362-3937]. All complaints must be submitted in writing. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.**

8. 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 the use and disclosure of your IHI may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your IHI for the reasons described in the authorization. Please note, we are required to retain records of your care. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.

Again, if you have any questions regarding this notice or our health information privacy policies, please contact [Practice Manager, (319) 362-3937.]

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NOTICE, PLEASE CONTACT:

Practice Manager, 1650 First Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402, (319) 362-3937.