

Northwest Arkansas Retina Associates, P.A.

Notice of Privacy Practices

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

Our Promise to You, Our Patients

Your information is important and confidential. Our ethics and policies require that your information be held in strict confidence.

Introduction

We maintain protocols to ensure the security and confidentiality of your personal information. We have physical security in our building, passwords to protect databases, compliance audits, and virus/intrusion detection software. Within our practice, access to your information is limited to those who need it to perform their jobs.

At the office of Northwest Arkansas Retina Associates, P.A., we are committed to treating and using protected health information (PHI) about you responsibly. This Notice of Privacy Policies describes the personal information we collect, and how and when we use or disclose that information. It also describes your rights as they relate to your PHI. This Notice is effective August 11, 2008 and applies to all PHI as defined by federal regulations.

Understanding Your Health Record

Each time you visit Northwest Arkansas Associates, PA, and a record of your visit is made. Typically, this record contains your symptoms, examination, test results, diagnoses, treatment, and a plan for future care or treatment. This information, known as your health or medical record, serves as a:

- Basis for planning your care and treatment;
- Means of communication among the many health professionals who contribute to your care;
- Legal document describing the care you received;
- Means by which you or a third-party payer can verify that services billed were actually provided;
- Tool in educating health professionals;
- Source of data for medical research;
- Source of information for public health officials charged to improve the health of the state and nation;
- Source of data for our planning and marketing; and,
- Tool by which we can assess and continually work to improve the care we render and outcomes we achieve.

Understanding what is in your record and how your health information is used helps you to: ensure its accuracy; better understand who, what, and why others may access your PHI; and make more informed decisions when authorizing disclosure to others.

Your Health Information Rights

Although your health record is the physical property of Northwest Arkansas Retina Associates, PA, the information belongs to you. You have the right to:

- Obtain a paper copy of this notice of privacy policies upon request;
- Inspect and obtain a copy of your health record; (reasonable copy fees apply in accordance with state law)
- Amend your health record;
- Obtain an accounting of disclosures of your PHI;
- Request confidential communications of your PHI;
- Request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your information (however, we are not required by law to agree to a requested restriction.)

Our Responsibilities

Our Practice is required to:

- Maintain the privacy of your health information;
- Provide you with this notice as to our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to information we collect and maintain about you;
- Abide by the terms of this notice;
- Notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction;
- Accommodate reasonable request you may have to communicate your health information.

We reserve the right to change our practices and to make the new provisions effective for all protected health information we maintain. We will keep a posted copy of the most current notice in our Office containing the effective date in the top, right-hand corner. In addition, each time you visit our office for treatment, you may obtain a copy of the current notice in effect upon request.

We will not use or disclose your PHI in a manner other than described in the section regarding Examples of Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Operations, without your written authorization, which you may revoke, except to the extent that action has already been taken.

For More Information or To Report a Problem

If you have questions and would like additional information, you may contact our Privacy Officer at 479-419-9393.

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you can either file a complaint with our Privacy Officer, or with the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (OCR). There will be no retaliation for filing a complaint with either our practice or the OCR.

Examples of Disclosures for Treatment, Payment, and Health Operations

We will use your health information for treatment: We may provide medical information about you to healthcare providers, our practice personnel, or third parties who are involved in the provision, management, or coordination of your care.

Example: Information obtained by a nurse, physician, or other member of your healthcare team will be recorded in your record and used to determine the course of treatment that should work best for you. Your medical information will be shared among healthcare professionals involved in your care.

We will also provide your other physician(s) or subsequent healthcare provider(s) (when applicable) with copies of various reports that should assist them in treating you.

We will use your health information for payment: We may disclose your information so that we can collect or make payment for the healthcare services you receive.

Example: If you participate in a health insurance plan, we will disclose necessary information to that plan to obtain payment for your care.

We will use your health information for regular health operations: We may disclose your PHI for our routine operations. These uses are necessary for certain administrative, financial, legal, and quality improvement activities that are necessary to run our practice and support the core functions.

Example: Members of the quality improvement team may use information in your health record to assess the care and outcomes in your case and others like it. This information will then be used in an effort to continually improve the quality and effectiveness of the healthcare and service we provide and to reduce healthcare costs.

- **Appointment reminders:** we may disclose medical information to provide appointment reminders (contacting you at the phone number you have provided to us and leaving a message as an appointment reminder.)
- **Decedents:** consistent with applicable law, we may disclose health information to a coroner, medical examiner, or funeral director.
- **Worker's Compensation:** we may disclose PHI to the extent authorized by and necessary to comply with laws relating to workers comp or other similar programs established by law.
- **Public Health:** As required by law, we may disclose your PHI to public health or legal authorities charged with preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability.
- **Research:** we may disclose information to researchers when their research has been approved and the researcher has obtained a required waiver from the Institutional Review Board / Privacy Board, who has reviewed the research proposal.
- **Organ Procurement Organization:** consistent with applicable law, we may disclose PHI to organ procurement organizations or other entities engaged in the procurement, banking or transplantation of organs for the purpose of donation and transplant.
- **As required by Law:** we may disclose PHI as required by law. This may include reporting a crime, responding to a court order, grand jury subpoena, warrant, discovery request, or other legal process, or complying with health oversight activities, such as audits, investigations, and inspections, necessary to ensure compliance with government regulations and civil rights law.
- **Specialized Government Functions:** We may disclose PHI for military and veteran's affairs or national security and intelligence activities.
- **Business Associates:** there are some services provided in our organization through contacts with business associates. Some examples are billing or transcription services we may use. Due to the nature of business associates' services, they must receive your PHI in order to perform the jobs we've asked them to do. To protect your PHI, however, when these services are contracted we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your information.
- **Practice Marketing:** we may contact you to provide information about treatment alternatives or other health – related benefits and services that may be of interest to you (for example, to notify you of any new tests or services we may be offering.)
- **Food and Drug Administration (FDA):** we may disclose to the FDA health information relative to adverse events with respect to food, supplements, product and product defects, or post marketing surveillance information to enable product recalls, repairs, or replacement.
- **Personal Representative:** we may disclose information to your personal representative (person legally responsible for your care and authorized to act on your behalf in making decisions related to your health care.)
- **To Avert a Service Threat to Health/Safety:** we may disclose your information when we believe in good faith that this is necessary to prevent a serious threat to your safety or that of another person. This may include cases of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence.
- **Communication with Family: Unless you object** – health professionals, using their best judgment, may disclose to family member or close personal friend health information relevant to that person's involvement in your care or payment related to your care. We may notify these individuals of your location and general condition.
- **Disaster Relief: Unless you object** --- we may disclose health information about you to an organization assisting in the disaster relief effort.

For all non-routine operations, we will obtain your written authorization before disclosing your PHI. In addition, we take great care to safeguard your information in every way that we can to minimize any incidental disclosures.