

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Introduction

At Edinger Medical Group and Research Center, we are committed to treating and using protected health information about you responsibly. This Notice of Privacy Practices 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 protected health information. This Notice is effective April 14, 2003, and applies to all protected health information as defined by federal regulations.

Understanding Your Health Record

Each time you visit Edinger Medical Group and Research Center, a record of your visit is made. Typically, this record contains your symptoms, examination and test results, diagnoses, treatment, and a plan for future care or treatment. This information, often referred to 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,
- A tool in educating health professionals,
- A source of data for medical research,
- A source of information for public health officials charged with improving the health of this state and nation,
- A source of data for our planning and marketing,
- A tool with which we can assess and continually work to improve the care we render and the 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, when, where, and why others may access your health information, and make more informed decisions when authorizing disclosure to others.

Your Health Information Rights

Although your health record is the physical property of Edinger Medical Group and Research Center, the information belongs to you. You have the right to:

- Obtain a paper copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices upon request,
- Inspect and obtain a copy of your health record as provided for in 45 CFR 164.524,
- Request an amendment to your health record as provided in 45 CFR 164.526,
- Obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information as provided by 45 CFR 164.528,
- Request communications of your health information as provided by 45 CFR 164.522(b), and
- Request a restriction on certain uses and disclosures of your information as provided by 45 CFR 164.222(a)

Our Responsibilities

Edinger Medical Group and Research Center 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, and
- Accommodate reasonable requests 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 facility containing the effective date in the top, right-hand corner. In addition, each time you visit our facility for treatment, you may obtain a copy of the current notice in effect upon request.

We will not use or disclose your health information 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 as provided by 45 CFR 164.508(b)(5), 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 practice's Privacy Officer at (714) 965-2500.

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you can either file a complaint with our practice's 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. The address for the OCR is as follows:

Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 509F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201

Examples of Disclosure for Treatment, Payment, and Health Operations

We will use your health information for treatment.

For example:

Information obtained by a nurse, physician, or other member of your health care team will be recorded in your record and used to determine the course of treatment that should work best for you. Your physician will document in your record his or her expectations of the members of your health care team. Members of your health care team will then record the actions they took and their observations. In that way, the physician will know how you are responding to treatment.

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

We will use your health information for payment.

For example:

A bill may be sent to you or a third-party payer. The information on or accompanying the bill may include information that identifies you, as well as your diagnosis, procedures, and supplies used.

We will use your health information for regular health operations.

For example:

Members of the medical staff, the risk or quality improvement manager, or 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.

- Appointment Reminders
We may use and disclose medical information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment.
- Business Associates
There are some services provided in our organization through contacts with business associates. Examples include physician services in the emergency department and radiology, certain laboratory tests, and a transcription service we use to transfer dictated patient care into the medical record. Due to the nature of business associates' services, they must receive your health information in order to perform the jobs we've asked them to do. To protect your health information, however, when these services are contracted we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your information.
- Research
We may disclose information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your health information.
- Coroners, Medical Examiners, and Funeral Directors
We may disclose health information to a coroner or medical examiner, and funeral directors as necessary to carry out their duties consistent with applicable laws.
- Organ Procurement Organizations
Consistent with applicable law, we may disclose health information to organ procurement organizations or other entities engaged in the procurement, banking, or transplantation of organs for the purpose of tissue donation and transplant.
- 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.
- Workers' Compensation
We may disclose health information to the extent authorized by and necessary to comply with laws relating to workers' compensation or other similar programs established by law.
- Public Health
As required by law, we may disclose your health information to public health or legal authorities charged with preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability.
- 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.
- Notification
We may use or disclose information to notify or assist in notifying a family member or personal representative (or other person responsible for your care) of your location and general condition.

- Communication With Family
Health professionals, using their best judgment, may disclose to a family member, other relative, or close personal friend (or any other person you identify) health information relevant to that person's involvement in your care or payment related to your care.
- Law Enforcement
We may disclose health information for law enforcement purposes as required by law or in response to a valid subpoena.
- Health Oversight Activities

Federal law makes provision for your health information to be released to an appropriate health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, inspections, investigations, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights.
- Lawsuits or Disputes
If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose medical information about you in response to a court or administrative order. We may also disclose medical information about you in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else involved in the dispute.