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PRIVACY POLICY AND PRACTICES

The Effects of HIPAA on the Privacy of Your Medical Information

Introduction: In 1996 the federal government passed legislation referred to as the HHealth Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, which has become known as HIPAA. The main intent of the act was to ensure that employees would be able to transfer group health insurance from one job to another. However, as time has passed, additional regulations have been added to the legislation so that the details now cover hundreds of pages of the Federal Register. Part of these regulations, known as the Privacy Rule, have to do with how your medical history and information can and can not be utilized by entities such as Valley Urological Associates, perhaps by your employer, your health insurer, or by other third parties.

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.

Your health information may be used by staff members or disclosed to other health care professionals for the purpose of evaluating your health, diagnosing medical conditions and providing treatment. For example, results of laboratory tests and procedures will be available in your medical record to all health professionals who may provide treatment or who may be consulted by other physicians.

Your health information may be used to seek payment from your health plan, from other sources of coverage such as an automobile insurer, or from credit card companies that you may use to pay for services. For example, your health plan may request and receive information on dates of service, the services provided, and the medical condition being treated.

Your health information may be used as necessary to support the day-to-day activities and management of Valley Urological Associates. For example, information on the services you received may be used to support budgeting and financial reporting and other activities to evaluate and promote quality within the practice.

Your health information may be disclosed to law enforcement agencies to support government audits and inspections, to facilitate law-enforcement investigations, and to comply with government-mandated reporting.

Your health information may be disclosed to public health agencies as required by law. For example, we are required to report certain communicable diseases to the state's public health department.



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Disclosure of your health information or its use for any purpose other than those listed requires your specific written authorization. If you change your mind after authorizing the use or disclosure of your information, you may submit a written revocation of the authorization. However, your decision to revoke the authorization will not affect or undo any use or disclosure of information that occurred before you notified us of your decision to revoke your authorization.

Additional Uses of Information

Appointment reminders. Your health information may be used by our staff to send you appointment information, i.e., “missed appointments.”

Information about treatments. Your health information may be used to send you information that you may find interesting about the treatment and management of your medical condition.

Individual Rights

You have certain rights under the federal privacy standards. These include:

- ✓ The right to request restrictions on the use and disclosure of your protected health information
- ✓ The right to receive confidential communications concerning your medical condition and treatment
- ✓ The right to inspect and copy your protected health information (appropriate copy fees will apply)
- ✓ The right to receive a printed copy of this notice

Valley Urological Duties

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your protected health information and to provide you with this notice of privacy practices.

We are also required to abide by the privacy policies and practices that are outlined in this notice.

Right to Revise Privacy Practices

As permitted by law, we reserve the right to amend or modify our privacy policies and practices. These changes in our policies and practices may be required by changes in federal and state laws and regulations. The revised policies and practices will be applied to all protected health information we maintain.



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Requests to Inspect Protected Health Information

You may generally inspect or copy the protected health information that we maintain about you. As permitted by federal regulation, we require that requests to inspect or copy protected health information must be submitted in writing, and we may charge you a nominal fee for copying the information. You may obtain a form to request access to your records by contacting our office. Your request will be reviewed and will generally be approved unless there are legal or medical reasons to deny the request.

Complaints

If you would like to submit a comment or complaint about our privacy practices, you can do so by sending a letter outlining your concerns to:

Practice Manager
Valley Urological Associates, Inc.
701 Broad Street, Suite 412
Sewickley, PA 15143

Effective Date: April 2003