

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

NORTHSTAR SURGERY SPECIALISTS, P.A.
12319 N. MOPAC EXPRESSWAY, SUITE 350
AUSTIN, TX 78758
(512) 491-6542

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. We are required by law to provide you with this notice, which explains the way in which we may use and disclose your PHI, as well as certain obligations we have under the law regarding the use and disclosure of your PHI. You also have certain rights regarding the privacy of your protected health information, which are described in this notice.

OUR PLEDGE REGARDING YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

NorthStar Surgery Specialists, P.A. takes protecting your privacy very seriously. We have built our practice on a foundation of integrity, honesty, and trust. We have great respect for our patients' right to privacy, and are committed to keeping your health information confidential and secure. We call this health information "protected health information", or "PHI" for short. This PHI includes information that can be used to identify you and that we have created or received about your past, present, or future health condition, the health care given to you, or the payment of this health care. We collect and use information that we believe is necessary to administer our business and to provide you with the best customer service possible.

Ways in Which We May Use and Disclose Your Protected Health Information

The following paragraphs describe different ways that we use and disclose your protected health information. We have provided an example for each category, but these examples are not meant to be exhaustive. We assure you that all of the ways we are permitted to use and disclose your health information fall within one of these categories.

Treatment. We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. We will also disclose your health information to other physicians who may be treating you. Additionally we may from time to time disclose your health information to another physician whom we have requested to be involved in your care. *For example* – we would disclose your health information to a specialist to whom we have referred you for a diagnosis to help in your treatment.

Payment. We will use and disclose your protected health information to obtain payment for the health care services we provide you. *For example* – we may include information with a bill to a third-party payer that identifies you, your diagnosis, procedures performed, and supplies used in rendering the service.

Health Care Operations. We will use and disclose your protected health information to support the business activities of our practice. *For example* – we may use medical information about you to review and evaluate our treatment and services or to evaluate our staff's performance while caring for you. In addition, we may disclose your health information to third party business associates who perform billing, consulting, or transcription services for our practice.

Appointment Reminders. We will use and disclose your protected health information to contact you as a reminder about scheduled appointments or treatment.

Treatment Alternatives. We will use and disclose your protected health information to tell you about or to recommend possible alternative treatments or options that may be of interest to you.

Others Involved in Your Care. We will use and disclose your protected health information to a family member, a relative, a close friend, or any other person you identify that is involved in your medical care or payment for care.

Research. We will use and disclose your protected health information to researchers provided the 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.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Public Health or Safety. We will use and disclose your protected health information to a public health authority that is permitted to collect or receive the information for the purpose of controlling disease, injury, or disability. If directed by that health authority, we will also disclose your health information to a foreign government agency that is collaborating with the public health authority.

Worker's Compensation. We will use and disclose your protected health information for worker's compensation or similar programs that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

Inmates. We will use and disclose your protected health information to a correctional institution or law enforcement official if you are an inmate of that correctional institution or under the custody of the law enforcement official. This information would be necessary for the institution to provide you with healthcare, to protect the health and safety of others, or for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

Your Health Information Rights

Although your health record is the physical property of the health care practitioner or facility that compiled it, the information belongs to you. You have the right to:

A Paper Copy of This Notice. You have the right to receive a paper copy of this notice on request. You may obtain a copy by asking our receptionist at your next visit or by calling and asking us to mail you a copy.

Inspect and Copy. You have the right to inspect and copy the protected health information that we maintain about you in our designated record set for as long as we maintain that information. This designated record set includes your medical and billing records, as well as any other records we use for making decisions about you. Any psycho-therapy notes that may have been included in records we received about you are not available for your inspection or copying by law. We may charge you a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, or other supplies used in fulfilling your request.

If you wish to inspect or copy your medical information, you must submit your request in writing to our office manager. You may mail in your request, or bring it to our office. We will have 30 days to respond to your request for information that we maintain at our practice site. If the information is stored off-site, we are allowed up to 60 days to respond but must inform you of this delay.

Request Amendment. You have the right to request that we amend your medical information if you feel that it is incomplete or inaccurate. You must make this request in writing to our practice manager, stating exactly what information is incomplete or inaccurate and the reasoning that supports your request.

We are permitted to deny your request if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. We may also deny your request if:

- the information was not created by us, or the person who created it is no longer available to make the amendment;
- the information is not part of the record which you are permitted to inspect and copy;
- the information is not part of the designated record set kept by this practice; or if it is the opinion of the health care provider that the information is accurate and complete.

Request Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction or limitation of how we use or disclose your medical information for treatment, payment, or health care operations. *For example* – you could request that we not disclose information about a prior treatment to a family member or friend who may be involved in your care or payment for care. Your request must be made in writing to our practice manager.

We are not required to agree to your request if we feel it is in your best interest to use or disclose that information. However, if we do agree, we will comply with your request unless that information is needed for emergency treatment.

An Accounting of Disclosures. You have the right to request a list of the disclosures of your health information we have made outside of your practice that were not for treatment, payment, or health care operations. Your request must be made in writing and must state the time period for the requested information. You may not request information for a period of time greater than six years (our legal obligation to retain information).

Your first request for a list of disclosures within a 12-month period will be free. If you request an additional list within 12 months of the first request, we may charge you a fee for the costs of providing the subsequent list. We will notify you of such costs and afford you the opportunity to withdraw your request before any costs are incurred.

Request Confidential Communications. You have the right to request how we communicate with you to preserve your privacy. *For example* – you may request that we call you only at your work number, or by mail at a special address or postal box. Your request must be made in writing and must specify how or where we are to contact you. We will accommodate all reasonable requests.

Uses or Disclosures Not Covered

Uses or disclosures of your health information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us may only be made with your written authorization. You may revoke such authorization in writing at any time and we will no longer disclose health information about you for the reasons stated in your written authorization. Disclosures made in reliance on the authorization prior to the revocation are not affected by the revocation.

Our Responsibilities

- Make sure that the health information which identifies you is kept private
- Provide you with this notice about our privacy practices that explain our legal duties regarding your PHI
- Follow the privacy practices that are described in this notice
- Notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction
- Accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate your PHI to alternative means or at alternative addresses

We reserve the right to change the terms of this notice and our privacy policy at any time. Any changes will apply to the PHI we already maintain. Should our notice change, we will make the revised notice available upon request. Except as described in this notice, we will not use or disclose your PHI in a manner inconsistent with this notice and without your written authorization.

For More Information or to *File a Complaint*

If you have questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact our office manager at (512) 491-6542. If you believe we have violated your medical information privacy rights, or you disagree with a decision we made about access to your PHI, you have the right to file a complaint with our office manager or directly to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

To file a complaint with our office manager, you must make it in writing within 180 days of the suspected violation. Provide as much detail as you can about the suspected violation and send it to 12414 Alderbrook Dr., Suite 101, Austin, TX, 78758. To file a complaint directly with the Department of Health and Human Services, submit it in writing to 200 Independence Ave. S.W., Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington D.C., 20201.

You should know that **there will be no retaliation against you for filing a complaint about our privacy practice.**