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## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

**EFFECTIVE APRIL 14, 2003**

**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 offices of Seasons OB/GYN, we are committed to treating and using protected health information 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 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 Seasons OB/GYN, 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.
- 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, 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 Seasons OB/GYN, 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 as provided by 45 CFR 164.524 (reasonable copy fees apply in accordance with state law).
- Amend your health record as provided by 45 CFR 164.526,
- Obtain an accounting of disclosures of your health information as provided by 45 CFR 164.528,
- Request confidential 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 164.522(a) (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 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.

We will use your health information for regular health operations.

We may disclose your health information 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.

*For 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 (e.g., 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.
- 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.
- 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 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 donation and transplant.
- As Required By Law  
We may disclose health information 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 laws.
- Specialized Government Functions

We may disclose health information for military and veterans affairs or national security & 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 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.
- 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 replacements.
- 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 Serious 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 a 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 a disaster relief effort.  
For all *non-routine* operations, we will obtain your written authorization before disclosing your personal

information. In addition, we take great care to safeguard your information in every way that we can to minimize any incidental disclosures.

**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:

Billie Baker, at (843) 569-2900

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you can either file a complaint with Billie Baker, 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 regional office for South Carolina is:

Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Atlanta Federal Center, Suite 3B70  
61 Forsyth Street, S.W.  
Atlanta, GA 30303-8909

**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 health care providers, our practice personnel, or third parties who are involved in the provision, management, or coordination of your care.

*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 medical information will be shared among health care professionals involved in your care.

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

*For Example:*

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