

HIPAA NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES
Foot and Ankle Institute of South Georgia
Erin & Nic Dodson, DPM

**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.**

This notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your protected health information (PHI) to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations (TPO), and for other purposes that are required by law. It also describes your rights and our obligations regarding the use and disclosure of that information. "Protected Health Information" (PHI) is information about you, including demographic information, that may identify you and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services.

Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information

Your protected health information may be used and disclosed by your physician, our office staff, and others outside of our office that are involved in your care and [treatment for](#) the purpose of providing health care services to you, to pay your health care bills, to support the operation of the physician's practice, and any other use required by law.

Treatment: We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. This includes the coordination of your health care with a third party. For example, your protected health information may be provided to a physician to whom you have been referred to ensure that the physician has the necessary information to diagnose or treat you. Different personnel in our office may share information about you and disclose information to people who do not work in our office in order to coordinate your care, such as phoning in prescriptions to your pharmacy, scheduling lab work and ordering diagnostic tests. Family members and other [healthcare providers](#) may be part of your medical care outside this office and may require information about you that we have.

Payment: Your protected health information will be used, as needed, to obtain payment for your health care services. For example, obtaining approval for a hospital stay may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the [health plan](#) to obtain approval for the hospital admission. We may also tell your health plan about a treatment you are going to receive to determine whether your plan will cover the treatment.

Healthcare Operations: We may use and disclose health information about you in order to run the office and make sure that you and our other patients receive quality care. For example, we may use your health information to evaluate the performance of our staff in caring for you. We may also use health information about all or many of our patients to help us decide what additional services we should offer, how we can become more efficient, or whether certain new treatments are effective. We may disclose your health information to medical students that may be training in our office(s). We may contact you as a reminder that you or your child(ren) have an appointment for treatment or medical care at the office.

Special Situations

We may use or disclose health information about you without your permission for the following purposes, subject to all applicable legal requirements and limitations. _

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety: We may use and disclose health information about you when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person.

Required By Law: We will disclose your health information when required to do so by federal, state, or local law.

Disaster Relief Efforts: We may disclose medical information about you to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status and location.

Research: We may use and disclose health information about you for research projects that are subject to a special approval process.

Organ and Tissue Donation: If you are an organ donor, we may release health information to organizations that handle organ procurement or organ, eye, or tissue transplantation or to an organ donation bank, as necessary to facilitate such donation and transplantation.

Military, Veterans, National Security and Intelligence: If you are or were a member of the armed forces, or part of the national security or intelligence communities, we may be required by military command or other government authorities to release information about you.

Worker's Compensation: We may release health information about you for Worker's Compensation or similar programs. The programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses.

Public Health Disclosures: We may disclose health information about you for public health purposes. These purposes generally include the following:

- preventing or controlling disease (such as cancer and tuberculosis), injury or disability;
- reporting vital events such as births and deaths;
- reporting child abuse or neglect;
- reporting adverse events or surveillance related to food, medications or defects or problems with products;
- notifying persons of recalls, repairs or replacements of products they may be using;
- notifying a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk of contracting or spreading a disease or condition;
- reporting to the employer findings concerning a work-related illness or injury or workplace-related medical surveillance;
- notifying the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence and make this disclosure as authorized or required by law.

Health Oversight Activities: We may disclose health information to a health oversight agency for audits, investigations, inspections, or licensing purposes. These disclosures may be necessary for certain state and federal agencies to monitor the healthcare system, government programs, and compliance with laws.

Lawsuits and Disputes: If you are involved in a lawsuit or dispute, we may disclose health information about you in response to a court or administrative order. Subject to all applicable legal requirements, we may also disclose health information about you in response to a subpoena.

Law Enforcement: If asked to do so by law enforcement, and as authorized or required by law, we may release medical information:

- to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person;
- about a suspected victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;
- about a death suspected to be the result of criminal conduct;
- about criminal conduct at the Foot and Ankle Institute of South Georgia; and
- in case of a medical emergency, to report a crime; the location of the crime or victims; or the identity, description or location of the person who committed the crime.

Coroners, Medical Examiners, and Funeral Directors: We may release health information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or to determine the cause of death.

Family and Friends: We may disclose health information about you to your family members or friends if we obtain your verbal agreement to do so or if we give you an opportunity to object to such a disclosure and you do not raise an objection. We may also disclose health information to your family or friends if we can infer from the circumstances, based on our professional judgment that you would not object. For example, we may assume you agree to our disclosure of your personal health information to your spouse when you bring your spouse with you into the exam room during treatment or while treatment is discussed.

Other Uses and Disclosures of Health Information

We will not use or disclose your health information for any purpose other than those identified in the previous sections without specific, written *authorization*. We must obtain your *authorization* separate from any other acknowledgement we may have obtained from you. If you give us *Authorization* to use or disclose health information about you, you may revoke that *Authorization*, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your *Authorization*, we will no longer use or disclose information about you for the reasons covered by your written *Authorization*, but we cannot take back any uses or disclosures already made with your permission.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

You have the following rights regarding health information we maintain about you:

Rights to Inspect and Copy: You have the right to inspect and copy your health information, such as medical and billing records, that we use to make decisions about your care. You must submit a written request to our designated privacy officer in order to inspect and/or copy your health information. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, and other associated supplies.

Right to Amend: If you believe health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. If we deny your request for an amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us and we may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy of any such rebuttal.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” This is a list of the disclosures we made of medical information about you for purposes other than treatment, payment and healthcare operations. To obtain this list, you must submit your request in writing to our designated privacy officer. It must state a time period, which may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before July 19, 2010.

Right to Request Restrictions: You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the health information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment, or healthcare operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the health information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for it, like a family member or friend. Your request must state the specific restriction requested and to whom you want the restriction to apply. We are not required to agree to a restriction. If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide proper medical treatment.

Right to Request Confidential Communications: You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail. We will accommodate all reasonable requests.

Right to a Paper copy of this Notice: You have the right to a paper copy of this Notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this Notice at any time.

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE

We reserve the right to change this notice, and to make the revised or changed notice effective for medical information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post the current notice in our office with its effective date. You are entitled to a copy of the Notice currently in effect.

COMPLAINTS

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our office or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our office, contact our privacy officer at **(229) 244-0070**. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

If you feel your complaint with our office was not handled appropriately, you may contact the Department of Health and Human Services at:

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201
Toll Free: 1-877-696-6775

THIS NOTICE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED AND BECAME EFFECTIVE July 19, 2010, AND WAS REVISED EFFECTIVE September 17, 2013.