



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

This document describes the type of information we gather about you, with whom that information may be shared and the safeguards in place to protect it. You have the right to the confidentiality of your medical information and the right to approve or refuse the release of specific information except when law requires the release. If the practices described in this document meet your expectations, there is nothing you need to do. If you prefer that information not be shared, we may honor your written request in certain circumstances described below. If you have any questions about this notice, please contact our Privacy Officer at the address below.

Who Will Follow This Notice

This notice describes Southeastern Gastroenterology's practices regarding the use of your medical information and that of:

- Any health care professional authorized to enter information into your chart or medical record.
- All departments and areas of Southeastern Gastroenterology, you may visit.
- Any member of our volunteer group we allow to help you while you are at Southeastern Gastroenterology,
- All employees, staff and other personnel who may need access to your information.
- All entities, sites and location of Southeastern Gastroenterology, follow the terms of this notice. In addition, these entities, sites and locations may share medical information with each other for treatment, payment or health care purposes described in this notice.

Our Pledge Regarding Medical Information

We understand that medical information about you and your health is personal. Protecting medical information about you is important. We create a record of the care and services you receive. We need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by Southeastern Gastroenterology, whether made by health care professionals or other personnel.

This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose medical information about you. We also describe your rights and certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of medical information. We are required by law to:

- Keep private all medical information that identifies you.
- Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to medical information about you.
- Follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect.

How We May Use and Disclose Medical Information About You

The following categories describe different ways that we may use and disclose medical information.

- **For Treatment.**- We may use medical information about you to provide you with medical treatment or services. We may disclose medical information about you to doctors, nurses, technicians, training doctors or other health care professionals who are involved in taking care of you. For example, a doctor treating you for a broken leg may need to know if you have diabetes because diabetes may slow the healing process. In addition, the doctor may need to tell the dietitian if you have diabetes so that we can arrange for appropriate meals. Different health care professionals also may share medical information about you in order to coordinate the different things you need, such as prescriptions, lab work and x-rays. We also may disclose medical information about you to people outside of Southeastern Gastroenterology, who may be involved in your medical care after you leave Southeastern Gastroenterology, or that provide services that are part of your care.
- **For Payment.**-We may use and disclose medical information about you so that the treatment and services you receive may be billed to and payment may be collected from you, an insurance company or a third party. For example, your insurance may need to know about surgery you received so they will pay us or reimburse you for the surgery. We may also use and disclose medical information about you to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your insurance will cover the treatment.

• **For Health Care Purposes-** We may use and disclose medical information about you for health care purposes. This is necessary to make sure that all of our patients receive quality care. For example, we may use medical information to review our treatment and services and to evaluate the performance of our staff in caring for you. We may also disclose information to doctors, nurses, technicians, training doctors, medical students and other personnel for review and learning purposes. We may remove information that identifies you from this set of medical information so others may use it to study health care and health care delivery without learning who the specific patients are.

Appointment Reminders– We may use and disclose medical information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment for treatment of medical care.

Treatment Alternatives- We may use and disclose medical information to tell you about or recommend possible treatment options or alternatives that may be of interest to you.

Health Related Benefits and Services– We may use and disclose medical information to tell you about health-related benefits of services that may be of interest to you.

Southeastern Gastroenterology, Directory- We may include certain limited information about you in the directory while you are a patient at Southeastern Gastroenterology, This information may include your name, location in Southeastern Gastroenterology, , your general condition (e.g., fair, stable, etc.) and your religious affiliation. The directory information, except for your religious affiliation, may also be release to people who ask for you by name. Your religious affiliation may be given to a member of the clergy, such as a priest or rabbi, even if they don't ask for you by name. This is so your family, friends and clergy can visit you in Southeastern Gastroenterology, and generally know how your are doing.

Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care- We may release medical information about you to a friend or family member who is involved in your medical care. We may also give information to someone who helps pay for your care. We may also tell your family of friends your condition and that you are in Southeastern Gastroenterology, In addition, 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- Under certain circumstances, we may use and disclose medical information about you for research purposes. For example, a research project may involve comparing the health and recovery of all patients who received one medication to those who received another, for the same condition. All research projects, however, are subject to a special approval process. This process evaluates a proposed research project and its use of medical information, trying to balance the research needs with patients' needs for privacy of their

medical information. Before we use or disclose medical information for research, the project will have been approved through this research approval process, but we may, however, disclose medical information about you to people preparing to conduct a research project, for example, to help them look for patients with specific medical needs, so long as the medical information they review does not leave Southeastern Gastroenterology. We will almost always ask for your specific permission if the researcher will have access to your name, address or other information that reveals who you are, or will be involved in your care at Southeastern Gastroenterology.

As Required By Law- We will disclose medical information about you when required to do so by federal, state or local law.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety- We may use and disclose medical 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. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone able to help prevent the threat.

Special Situations

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

Military and Veterans- If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release medical information about you as required by military command authorities.

Workers' Compensation- We may release medical information about you for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.

Public Health Risks- We may disclose medical information about you for public health activities. These activities generally include the following:

- To prevent or control disease, injury or disability.
- To report births and deaths
- To report child abuse or neglect.
- To report reactions to medications or problems with products.
- To notify people of recalls of products they may be using.
- To notify a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition.
- To notify the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.

Health Oversight Activities- We may disclose medical information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, for example, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs and compliance with civil rights laws.

Lawsuits and Disputes- We may disclose medical information about you in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful order from a court. We may also disclose medical information for the defense of medical professional liability claims asserted by patients.

Law Enforcement- We may release medical information if asked to do so by a law enforcement official as part of law enforcement activities; in investigations of criminal conduct or of victims of crime; in response to court orders; in emergency circumstances, or when required to do so by law.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors- We may release medical information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also release medical information about patients to funeral directors as necessary to carry out their duties.

Protective Services for the President, National Security and Intelligence Activities- We may release medical information about you to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, other

authorized persons or foreign heads of state or conduct special investigations, or for intelligence, counterintelligence and other national security activities authorized by law.

Inmates- If you are inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of law enforcement official, we may release medical information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

Your Rights Regarding Medical Information About You

You have the following rights regarding medical information we maintain about you;

Right to Inspect and Copy- You have the right to inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about your care. Usually, this includes medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes. To inspect and copy medical information that may be used to make decisions about you, you must submit your request in writing to our Privacy Officer at the address below. If you request a copy of the information; we may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request. We may deny your request to inspect and copy in certain, very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to medical information, you may request that the denial be reversed. Another licensed health care professional chosen by Southeastern Gastroenterology, will review your request and the denial. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.

Right to Amend- If you feel that medical information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to our Privacy Officer. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request. We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:

- Was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment.
- Is not part of the medical information kept by Southeastern Gastroenterology,
- Is not part of the information that you would be permitted to inspect and copy.
- Is accurate and complete.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures- You have the right to request an “accounting of disclosure”. This is a list of the disclosures we made of medical information about you. To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to our Privacy Officer.

Your request must state a time period that may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, on paper, electronically). The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred.

Right to Request Restrictions- You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the medical information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the medical information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend.

We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment. To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to our Privacy Officer at the address below. In your request, you must tell us (1) what

information you want to limit; (2) whether you want to limit our use, disclosure or both; and (3) to whom you want the limits to apply.

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.

To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to our Privacy Officer. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.

Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice- You have the right to a paper copy of this notice at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice.

To obtain a paper copy of this notice, please request one in writing from our Privacy Officer at the address below.

Changes to This Notice– We reserve the right to change this notice. We reserve the right 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 a copy of the current notice. The notice will contain on the first page, in the top right-hand corner, the effective date.

Complaints– If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with Southeastern Gastroenterology, or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with Southeastern Gastroenterology, , contact our Privacy Officer at the address and phone number below. All complaints must be submitted in writing.

You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

Other Uses of Medical Information- Other uses and disclosures of medical information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose medical information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, thereafter we will no longer use or disclose medical information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.