



**7000 SW 62 Avenue, Suite 350
South Miami, FL 33143
305-665-9644**

Federal Privacy Act

**HIPAA NOTICE
OF
PRIVACY PRACTICES**

South Miami Women's Health

7000 SW 62nd Avenue, Suite 350

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Dear Patient,

Physicians have always protected the confidentiality of health information by sealing medical records away in file cabinets and refusing to reveal your health information. Today, state and federal laws also attempt to ensure the confidentiality of this sensitive information.

The federal government recently published regulations designed to protect the privacy of your health information. This "privacy rule" protects health information that is maintained by physicians, hospitals, other health care providers and health plans.

This news regulation protects virtually all patients regardless of where they live or where they receive their health care. Every time you see a physician, are admitted to the hospital, fill a prescription, or send a claim to a health plan, your physician, the hospital or the other health care provider will need to consider the privacy rule. All health information including paper records, oral communications, and electronic formats (such as e-mail) are protected by the privacy rule.

The privacy rule also provides you certain rights, such as the right to have access to our medical records. However, there are exceptions; these rights are not absolute. We also take precautions in our office to safeguard your health information such as training our employees and employing computer security measures. Please feel free to ask your physician or our privacy officer about exercising your rights to how your health information is protected in our office.

The Notice of Privacy Practices attached to this letter explains our privacy practices. It contains very important information about how your confidential health information is handled by our office. It also describes how you can exercise your rights with regard to your protected health information.

Please let us know if you have any questions about our Notice of Privacy Practices. You may also contact our Privacy Officer at (305) 665-9644, or discuss any questions you may have with your physician.

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HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices

Effective Date: April 15, 2003

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information.

Our Obligations:

We are required by law to:

Maintain the privacy of protected health information

Give you this notice of legal duties and privacy practices regarding health information about you

Follow the terms of our notice that is currently in effect

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION

Described as follows are the ways we may use and disclose health information that identifies you ("Health Information"). Except for the following purposes, we will use and disclose Health Information only with your written permission. You may revoke such permission at any time by writing to our Privacy Officer.

Treatment: We may use and disclose Health Information for your treatment and to provide you with treatment-related health care services. For example, we may disclose Health Information to doctors, nurses, technicians, or other personnel, including people outside our office who are involved in your medical care and need information to provide you with medical care.

Payment: We may use and disclose Health Information so that we or others may bill and receive payment from you, an insurance company, or a third party for the treatment and services you received. For example, we may give your health plan information so that they will pay for your treatment.

Healthcare Operations: We may use and disclose Health Information for health care operation purposes. These uses and disclosures are necessary to make sure that all of our patients receive quality care and to operate and manage our office. For example, we may use and disclose information to make sure that obstetrical and gynecological care you receive is of the highest quality. We also may share information with other entities that have a relationship with you, (for example, your health plan) for their health operations.

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Appointment reminders, Treatment Alternatives and Health Related Benefits and Services: We may use and disclose Health Information to contact you and to remind you that you have an appointment with us. We also may use and disclose Health Information to tell you about treatment alternatives or health related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care: When appropriate, we may share Health Information with a person who is involved in your medical care or payment for your care (such as your family or a close friend). We also may notify your family about your location or general condition or disclose such information to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort.

Research: Under certain circumstances, we may use and disclose Health Information for research. For example, a research project may involve comparing the health information of patients who received one treatment to those who received another, for the same condition. Before we use or disclose your Health Information for research, the project will go through a special approval process. Even without special approval, we may permit researchers to look at records to help them identify patients who may be included in their research project or for other similar purposes, as long as, they do not remove or take a copy of any Health Information.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS:

As Required by Law: We will disclose Health Information when required to do so by international, federal, state or local law.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety: We may use and disclose Health Information when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of the public or another person. Disclosures, however, will be made only to someone who may be able to help prevent the threat.

Business Associates: We may disclose Health Information to our business associates that perform functions on our behalf or provide us with services if the information is necessary for such functions or services. For example, we may use another company to perform billing services on our behalf. All of our business associates are obligated to protect the privacy of your information and are not allowed to use or disclose any information other than as specified in our contract.

Organ and Tissue Donation: If you are an organ donor, we may use or release Health Information to organizations that handle organ procurement or other entities engaged in procurement: banking or transportation of organs, yes, or tissues to facilitate organ, eye or tissue donation; and transplantation.

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Military and Veterans: If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release Health Information as required by military command authorities. We also may release Health Information to the appropriate foreign military authority if you are a member of a foreign military.

Workers' Compensation: We may release Health Information for workers' compensation or similar programs. These programs provide benefits for work related injuries or illness.

Public Health Ricks: We may disclose Health Information for public activities. These activities generally include disclosures to prevent or control disease, injury, or disability; report births and deaths; report child abuse or neglect; report reactions to medications or problems with products; notify people of recalls of products they may be using; a person who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition; and the appropriate government authority if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse; neglect or domestic violence. We will only make this disclosure if you agree or when required or authorized by law.

Health Oversight Activities: We may disclose Health 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 right laws.

Lawsuits and Disputes: If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose Health Information in response to a court or administrative order. We also may disclose Health Information in response to a subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process by someone else individual in the dispute, but only if efforts have been made to tell you about the request or to obtain an order protecting the information requested.

Law Enforcement: we may release Health Information if asked by a law enforcement official if the information is: (1) in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons, or similar process; (2) limited information to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or missing person; (3) about the victim of a crime even if, under certain very limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement; (4) about a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct; (5) about criminal conduct on our premises; and (6) in an 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.

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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 determine the cause of death. We also may release Health Information to funeral directors as necessary for their duties.

National Security and Intelligence Activities: We may release Health Information to authorized federal officers for intelligence, counter intelligence, and other national security activities authorized by law.

Protective Services for the President and Others: We may disclose Health Information to authorized federal officials so they may provide protection to the President, or other authorized persons, or foreign heads of state, or to conduct special investigations.

Inmates or Individuals in Custody: If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release Health Information to the correctional institution or law enforcement official. This release would be if 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) the safety and security of the correctional institution.

YOUR RIGHTS:

You have the following rights regarding Health Information we have about you:

Right to Inspect and Copy: You have a right to inspect and copy Health Information that may be used to make decisions about your care or payment for your care. This includes medical and billing records, other than psychotherapy notes. To inspect and copy this Health Information, you must make your request, in writing to our Medical Records Staff.

Right to Amend: If you feel that Health Information we have 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 by or for our office. To request an amendment, you must make a request, in writing, to our Office Manager.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request a list of certain disclosures we made of Health Information for purposes other than treatment, payment and health care operations or for which you provided written authorization. To request an accounting disclosures, you must make your request, in writing, to our Billing Department.

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Right to Request Restrictions: You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the Health Information we use or disclose for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the Health Information we disclose to someone involved in your care or the payment for your care, like family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not share information about a particular diagnosis or treatment with your spouse. To request a restriction, you must make your request, in writing, to our Office Manager. **We are not required to agree to your request.** If we agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment.

Right to Request Confidential Communication: 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 by mail or at work. To request confidential communication, you must make your request, in writing, to our Office Manager. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. We will accommodate 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. 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 you must make your request, in writing, to our Office Manager.

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE:

We reserve the right to change this notice and make the new notice apply to Health Information we already have as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of our current notice at our office. The notice will contain the effective date on the first page, in the top right hand corner.

COMPLAINTS:

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our Office Manager or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our Office Manager, contact our office. All complaints must be made in writing. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.