

## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

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*This notice describes how your health information may be used or disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully. The privacy of your health information is important to us.*

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### OUR LEGAL DUTY

We are required by applicable federal and state law to maintain the privacy of your health information. We are also required to give you this Notice about our privacy practices, our legal duties, and your rights concerning your health information. We must follow the privacy practices that are described in this Notice while it is in effect. This Notice takes effect (04/14/03), and will remain in effect until we replace it.

We reserve the right to change our privacy practices and the terms of this Notice at any time, provided such changes are permitted by applicable law. We reserve the right to make the changes in our privacy practices and the new terms of our Notice effective for all health information that we maintain, including health information we created or received before we made the changes. Before we make a significant change in our privacy practices, we will change this Notice and make the new Notice available upon request.

### USES AND DISCLOSURES OF HEALTH INFORMATION

We use and disclose health information about you for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations. For example:

**Treatment:** We will use your health information within our office to provide you with the best dental care possible. This may include administrative and clinical office procedures designed to optimize scheduling and coordination of care between hygienist, dental assistant, dentist, and business office staff. In addition, we may share your health information with physicians, referring dentists, clinical and dental laboratories, pharmacies or other healthcare personnel providing treatment to you.

**Payment:** We may include your health information with an invoice used to collect payment for treatment you receive in our office. We may do this with insurance forms filed for you in the mail or sent electronically. We will be sure to work with companies with a similar commitment to the security of your health information.

**Healthcare Operations:** Your health information may be used during performance evaluations of our staff. Some of the best teaching opportunities use clinical situations experienced by patients receiving care at our office. As a result, health information may be included in training programs for students, interns, associates, and business and clinical employees. It is also possible that health information will be disclosed during audits by insurance companies or government appointed reviews. Your health information may be reviewed during the routine processes of certification, licensing or credentialing activities.

**Patient Reminders:** Because we believe regular care is very important to your oral and general health, we will remind you of a scheduled appointment or that it is time for you to contact us and make an appointment. We may also contact you to follow up on your care or inform you of treatment options or services that may be of interest to you or your family. These communications are an important part of our philosophy of partnering with our patients to be sure they receive the best preventive and restorative care modern dentistry can provide. They may include postcards, folding postcards, letters, telephone reminders or electronic reminders such as email (unless you tell us that you do not want to receive these reminders).

**Abuse or Neglect:** We will notify government authorities if we believe a patient is the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. We will make this disclosure only when we are compelled by our ethical judgment, when we believe we are specifically required or authorized by law or with the patient's agreement.

**Public Health and National Security:** We may be required to disclose to Federal officials or military authorities health information necessary to complete an investigation related to public health or national security. Health information could be

important when the government believes that the public safety could benefit when the information could lead to the control or prevention of an epidemic or the understanding of new side effects of a drug treatment or medical device.

**For Law Enforcement:** As permitted or required by State or Federal law, we may disclose your health information to a law enforcement official for certain law enforcement purposes, including, under certain limited circumstances, if you are a victim of a crime or in order to report a crime.

**Family, Friends and Caregivers:** We may share your health information with those you tell us will be helping you with your home hygiene, treatment, medications, or payment. We will be sure to ask your permission first. In the case of an emergency, where you are unable to tell us what you want, we will use our professional judgment when sharing your health information only when it will be important to those participating in providing your care.

**Authorization to Use or Disclose Health Information:** Other than is stated above or where Federal, State or Local law requires us, we will not disclose your health information other than with your written authorization. You may revoke that authorization in writing at any time.

## PATIENT RIGHTS

**Restrictions:** You have the right to request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of your health information. Our office will make every effort to honor reasonable restriction preferences from our patients.

**Confidential Communications:** You have the right to request that we communicate with you in a certain way. You may request that we only communicate your health information privately with no other family members present or through mailed communications that are sealed. We will make every effort to honor your reasonable requests for confidential communications.

**Inspect and Copy Health Information:** You have the right to read, review, and copy your health information, including your complete chart, x-rays and billing records. If you would like a copy of your health information, please let us know. We may need to charge you a reasonable fee to duplicate and assemble your copy.

**Amend Your Health Information:** You have the right to ask us to update or modify your records if you believe your health information records are incorrect or incomplete. We will be happy to accommodate you as long as our office maintains this information. In order to standardize our process, please provide us with your request in writing and describe your reason for change. Your request may be denied if the health information record in question was not created by our office, is not part of our records, or if the records containing your health information are determined to be accurate and complete.

**Documentation of Health Information:** You have the right to ask us for a description of how and where your health information was used by our office for any reason other than for treatment, payment or health operations. Our documentation procedures will enable us to provide information on health information usage from April 14, 2003 and forward. Please let us know in writing the time period for which you are interested. Thank you for limiting your request to no more than six years at a time. We may need to charge you a reasonable fee for your request.

**Request a Paper Copy of this Notice:** You have the right to obtain a copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices directly from our office at any time. Stop by or give us a call and we will mail, or email a copy to you.

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your health information and to provide to you and your representative this Notice of our Privacy Practices. We are required to practice the policies and procedures described in this notice but we do reserve the right to change the terms of our Notice. If we change our privacy practices we will be sure all of our patients receive a copy of the revised Notice.

You have the right to express complaints to us or to the Secretary of Health and Human Services if you believe your privacy rights have been compromised. We encourage you to express any concerns you may have regarding the privacy of your information. Please let us know of your concerns or complaints in writing.