

Ear, Nose, & Throat of Northwest Georgia
HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices

Effective Date: September 23, 2013

**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.**

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact Ear, Nose, & Throat of Northwest Georgia.

OUR OBLIGATIONS:

We are required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy of protected health information
- Give you this notice of our 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:

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

For 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 the information to provide you with medical care.

For 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 about you so that they will pay for your treatment.

For Health Care Operations We may use and disclose Health Information for health care operations 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 the obstetrical or 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 care operation activities.

Appointment Reminders, Treatment Alternatives and Health Related Benefits and Services. We may use and disclose Health Information to contact you 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 of patients who received one treatment to those who received another, for the same condition. Before we use or disclose 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, eyes or tissues to facilitate organ, eye or tissue donation and transplantation.

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 Risks We may disclose Health Information for public health 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 rights laws.

Data Breach Notification Purposes We may use or disclose your Protected Health Information to provide legally required notices of unauthorized access to or disclosure of your health information.

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 involved 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.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors We may release Health Information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to

revocation to our Privacy Officer and we will no longer disclose Protected Health Information under the authorization. But disclosure that we made in reliance on your authorization before you revoked it will not be affected by the revocation.

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 Ear, Nose, & Throat of Northwest Georgia. We have up to 30 days to make your Protected Health Information available to you and we may charge you a reasonable fee for the costs of copying, mailing or other supplies associated with your request. We may not charge you a fee if you need the information for a claim for benefits under the Social Security Act or any other state or federal needs-based benefit program. We may deny your request in certain limited circumstances. If we do deny your request, you have the right to have the denial reviewed by a licensed healthcare professional who was not directly involved in the denial of your request, and we will comply with the outcome of the review.

Right to an Electronic Copy of Electronic Medical Records If your Protected Health Information is maintained in an electronic format (known as an electronic medical record or an electronic health record), you have the right to request that an electronic copy of your record be given to you or transmitted to another individual or entity. We will make every effort to provide access to your Protected Health Information in the form or format you request, if it is readily producible in such form or format. If the Protected Health Information is not readily producible in the form or format you request your record will be provided in either our standard electronic format or if you do not want this form or format, a readable hard copy form. We may charge you a reasonable, cost-based fee for the labor associated with transmitting the electronic medical record.

Right to Get Notice of a Breach You have the right to be notified upon a breach of any of your unsecured Protected Health Information.

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 your request, in writing, to Ear, Nose, & Throat of Northwest Georgia.

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 of disclosures, you must make your request, in writing, to Ear, Nose, & Throat of Northwest Georgia.

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 a 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 Ear, Nose, & Throat of Northwest Georgia. We are not required to agree to your request unless you are asking us to restrict the use and disclosure of your Protected Health Information to a health plan for payment or health care operation purposes and such information you wish to restrict pertains solely to a health care item or service for which you have paid us "out-of-pocket" in full. If we agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment.

Out-of-Pocket-Payments If you paid out-of-pocket (or in other words, you have requested that we not bill your health plan) in full for a specific item or service, you have the right to ask that your Protected Health Information with respect to that item or service not be disclosed to a health plan for purposes of payment or health care operations, and we will honor that request.

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 by mail or at work. To request confidential communications, you must make your request, in writing, to Ear, Nose, & Throat of Northwest Georgia. 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, or you may go to our website, www.entnwga.net. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice.

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 or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. Because we are always interested in improving the quality of services provided to you, we would encourage you to contact us first. To file a complaint with our office, contact Ear, Nose & Throat of Northwest Georgia. All complaints must be made in writing. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.**

For more information on HIPAA privacy requirements, HIPAA electronic transactions and code sets regulations and the proposed HIPAA security rules, please visit ACOG's web site, www.acog.org, or call (202) 863-2584.

If you have questions about this notice, please contact:

PRIVACY OFFICER
EAR, NOSE & THROAT OF NORTHWEST GEORGIA
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