



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW DERMCARE PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR HEALTHCARE INFORMATION AND HOW YOU CAN OBTAIN ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons is required by law to maintain the privacy of your protected health information. This information consists of all records related to your health, including demographic information, either created by Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons or received by Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons from other healthcare providers.

We are required to provide you with notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your protected health information. These legal duties and privacy practices are described in this notice. Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons will abide by the terms of this notice, or the notice currently in effect at the time of the use or disclosure of your protected health information.

Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons reserves the right to change the terms of this Notice and to make any provisions effective for all protected health information that we maintain. Patients will be provided a copy of any revised notices upon request. An individual may obtain a copy of the current notice from our office at any time.

Uses and Disclosures of your Protected Health Information not Requiring Your Consent.

Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons may use and disclose your protected health information, without your written consent or authorization, for certain treatment, payment and healthcare operations. There are certain restrictions on uses and disclosures of treatment records, which include registration and all other records concerning individuals who are receiving, or who at any time have received services for mental illness, developmental disabilities, alcoholism, or drug dependence. There are also restrictions on disclosing HIV test results.

Treatment may include:

Providing, coordinating, or managing healthcare and related services by one or more healthcare providers;
Consultations between healthcare providers concerning a patient;
Referrals to other providers for treatment;
Referrals to nursing homes, foster care homes, or home health agencies.

For example, Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons may determine that you require the services of a specialist. In referring you to another doctor, Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons may share or transfer your healthcare information to that doctor.

Electronic Medical Record

Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons documents your medical information into the Partners Healthcare System's EPIC Medical Record (EPIC). This record is a shared electronic medical record among all Partners Practitioners. If you are registered to see another Partner's Practitioner, your medical information will be accessible to that Practitioner and his/her practice. Those records include all documentation of your patient care treatment including photographs. Any physician that you may be referred to who is not within the Partner's Healthcare system will receive when requested, a hard copy of the information needed.

Healthcare operations may include:

Contacting healthcare providers and patients with information about treatment alternatives;
Conducting quality assessment and improvement activities;
Conducting outcomes evaluation and development of clinical guidelines;
Protocol development, case management, or care coordination;
Conducting or arranging for medical review, legal services, and auditing functions.

For example Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons may use your diagnosis, treatment, and outcome information to measure the quality of the services that we provide, or assess the effectiveness of your treatment when compared to patients in similar situations.

Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons may contact you by phone, or mail to provide appointment reminders. You must notify us if you do not wish to receive appointment reminders and a form will be given to you at registration that you will complete with these instructions.

We may not disclose your protected health information to family members or friend who may be involved with your treatment or care without your written permission. Health information may be released without written permission to a parent, guardian, or legal custodian of a child; the guardian of an incompetent adult; the healthcare agent designated in an incapacitated patient's healthcare power of attorney; or the personal representative or spouse of a deceased patient. There are additional situations when Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons is permitted or required to use or disclose your protected health information without your consent or authorization. Examples include the following;

As permitted or required by law.

In certain circumstances we may be required to report individual health information to legal authorities, such as Law enforcement officials, court officials, or government agencies. For example, we may have to report abuse, Neglect, domestic violence or certain physical injuries. We are required to report gunshot wounds or any wound To law enforcement officials if there is reasonable cause to believe that the wound occurred as a result of a crime Mental health records may be disclosed to law enforcement authorities for the purpose of reporting an apparent Crime on our premises.

For public health activities.

We may release healthcare records, with the exception of treatment records, to certain government agencies or public health authority authorized by law, upon receipt of written request from that agency. We are required to report positive HIV test results to the state epidemiologist. We may also disclose HIV test results to other providers or persons when there has been or will be risk of exposure.

We may report to the state epidemiologist the name of any person known to have been significantly exposed to a patient who tests positive for HIV. We are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect and suspected abuse of an unborn child, but cannot disclose HIV test results in connection with the reporting or prosecution of alleged abuse or neglect. We may release healthcare records, including treatment records and HIV test results, to the Food and Drug Administration when required neglect, provided the subject of the abuse or neglect agrees, or if necessary to prevent serious harm. Records may be released for the reporting of domestic violence if necessary to protect the patient or community from imminent and substantial danger.

For health oversight activities.

We may disclose healthcare records, including treatment records, in response to a written request by any federal or state governmental agency to perform any legally authorized functions, such as management audits, financial audits, program monitoring and evaluation, and facility or individual licensure or certification. HIV test results may not be released to federal or state governmental agencies, without written permission, except to the state epidemiologist for surveillance, investigation, or to control communicable disease.

Judicial and Administrative Proceedings.

Patient healthcare records, including treatment records and HIV test results, may be disclosed pursuant to a lawful court order. A subpoena signed by a judge is sufficient to permit disclosure of all healthcare records except for HIV test results.

For activities related to death.

We may disclose patient healthcare records to a coroner or medical examiner for the purpose of completing a medical certificate or investigating a death.

For research.

Under certain circumstances, and only after a special approval process, we may use and disclose your healthcare information to help conduct research.

To avoid a serious threat to health or safety.

We may report a patients name and other relevant data to the Department of Transportation if it is believed the patient's vision, physical or mental condition affects the patient's ability to exercise reasonable or ordinary control over a motor vehicle. Healthcare information may be disclosed where disclosure is necessary to protect the patient or community from imminent and substantial danger.

For workers' compensation.

We may disclose your healthcare information to the extent such records is reasonably related to any injury for which workers compensation is claimed.

Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons will not make any other use or disclosures of your health information without your written authorization. You may revoke such authorization at any time, except to the extent that Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons has taken action in reliance thereon. Any revocation must be in writing.

Your Rights Regarding Your Protected Health Information

You are permitted to request that restrictions be placed on certain uses or disclosures of your health information by Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons to carry out treatment, payment, or healthcare operations. You must request such a restriction in writing. We are not required to agree to your request, but if we do agree, we must adhere to the restriction, except when your protected health information is needed in an emergency treatment situation. In this event, information may be disclosed only to healthcare providers treating you. Also, a restriction would not apply when we are required by law to disclose certain healthcare information.

You have the right to review and/or obtain a copy of your healthcare records, with the exception of psychotherapy notes, or information compiled for use (or in anticipation for use) in a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding. Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons may deny any access under other circumstances, in which case you have the right to have such a denial reviewed. We may charge a reasonable fee for copying your records.

You may request that Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons send protected health information, including billing information, to you by alternative means or to alternative locations. You may also request that Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons not send information to a particular address or location or contact you at a specific location, perhaps your place of employment. This request must be submitted in writing on the form provided at registration. We will accommodate reasonable requests by you. You have the right to request that Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons amend portions of your healthcare records, as long as such information is maintained by us. You must submit this request in writing, and under certain circumstances the request may be denied.

You may request to receive an accounting of the disclosure of your health information made by Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons for the six years prior to the date of the request, beginning with the disclosures made after April 14, 2003. We are not required, however, to record disclosures we make pursuant to a signed consent or authorization.

You may request and receive a paper copy of this notice, if you had previously received or agreed to receive the notice electronically.

Any person or patient may file a complaint with Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons and/or the Secretary of Health and Human Services if they believe their privacy rights have been violated. To file a complaint with Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons please contact the Privacy Officer at the following:

Privacy Officer
Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons
33 Village Square
Chelmsford, MA 01824

It is the policy of Dermcare Physicians and Surgeons that no retaliatory action will be made against any individual who submits or conveys a complaint of suspected or actual non-compliance or violation of the privacy standards.

This Notice of Privacy Practices is effective April 14, 2003

This Notice is prepared in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, 45 C.F.R. 164.520.