

BEAUMONT BONE & JOINT INSTITUTE

Notice of Privacy Practices

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.

Original Effective Date: April 14, 2003

Last Revised: April 14, 2003

A federal regulation, known as the "HIPAA Privacy Rule," requires that we provide detailed notice in writing of our privacy practices. We know that this Notice is long. The HIPAA Privacy Rule requires us to address many specific things in this Notice.

I. OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

In this Notice, we describe the ways that we may use and disclose health information about our patients. The HIPAA Privacy Rule requires that we protect the privacy of health information that identifies a patient, or where there is a reasonable basis to believe the information can be used to identify a patient. This information is called "protected health information" or "PHI." This Notice describes your rights as our patient and our obligations regarding the use and disclosure of PHI. We are required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy of PHI about you;
- Give you this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to PHI; and
- Comply with the terms of our Notice of Privacy Practices that is currently in effect.

As permitted by the HIPAA Privacy Rule, we reserve the right to make changes to this Notice and to make such changes effective for all PHI we may already have about you. If and when this Notice is changed, we will post a copy in our office in a prominent location. We will also provide you with a copy of the revised Notice upon your request made to our Privacy Official.

You will be asked to sign a form to show that you received this Notice. Even if you do not sign this form, we will still provide you with treatment.

II. HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

USES AND DISCLOSURES FOR TREATMENT, PAYMENT, AND HEALTH CARE OPERATIONS

The following categories describe the different ways we may use and disclose PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations without your consent or authorization. The examples included in each category do not list every type of use or disclosure that may fall within that category.

Treatment: We may use and disclose PHI about you to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and related services. We may consult with other health care providers regarding your treatment and coordinate and manage your health care with others. For example, we may use and disclose PHI when you need a prescription, lab work, an X-ray, or other health care services. In addition, we may use and disclose PHI about you when referring you to another health care provider. For example, if you are referred to another physician, we may disclose PHI to your new physician regarding whether you are allergic to any medications. In emergencies, we may use and disclose PHI to provide the treatment you need.

We may also disclose PHI about you for the treatment activities of another health care provider. For example, we may send a report about you to a physician that we refer you to so that the other physician may treat you.

Payment: We may use and disclose PHI so that we can bill and collect payment for the treatment and services provided to you. Before providing treatment or services, we may share details with your health plan concerning the services you are scheduled to receive. For example, we may ask for payment approval from your health plan before we provide care or services. We may use and disclose PHI to find out if your health plan will cover the cost of care and services we provide. We may use and disclose PHI to confirm you are receiving the appropriate amount of care to obtain payment for services. We may use and disclose PHI for billing, claims management, and collection activities. We may disclose PHI to insurance companies providing you with additional coverage. We may disclose limited PHI to consumer reporting agencies relating to collection of payments owed to us.

We may also disclose PHI to another health care provider or to a company or health plan required to comply with the HIPAA Privacy Rule for the payment activities of that health care provider, company, or health plan. For example, we may allow a health insurance company to review PHI for the insurance company's activities to determine the insurance benefits to be paid for your care.

Health Care Operations: We may use and disclose PHI in performing business activities that are called health care operations. Health care operations include doing things that allow us to improve the quality of care we provide and to reduce health care costs. We may use and disclose PHI about you in the following health care operations:

- Reviewing and improving the quality, efficiency, and cost of care that we provide to our patients. For example, we may use PHI about you to develop ways to assist our physicians and staff in deciding how we can improve the medical treatment we provide to others.
- Improving health care and lowering costs for groups of people who have similar health problems and helping to manage and coordinate the care for these groups of people. We may use PHI to identify groups of people with similar health problems to give them information, for instance, about

OTHER USES AND DISCLOSURES OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION REQUIRE YOUR AUTHORIZATION

All other uses and disclosures of PHI about you will only be made with your written authorization. If you have authorized us to use or disclose PHI about you, you may later revoke your authorization at any time, except to the extent we have taken action based on the authorization.

III. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

Under federal law, you have the following rights regarding PHI about you:

Right to Request Restrictions: You have the right to request additional restrictions on the PHI that we may use or disclose for treatment, payment, and health care operations. You may also request additional restrictions on our disclosure of PHI to certain individuals involved in your care that otherwise are permitted by the Privacy Rule. *We are not required to agree to your request.* If we do agree to your request, we are required to comply with our agreement except in certain cases, including where the information is needed to treat you in the case of an emergency. To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to our Privacy Official. In your request, please include (1) the information that you want to restrict; (2) how you want to restrict the information (for example, restricting use to this office, only restricting disclosure to persons outside this office, or restricting both); and (3) to whom you want those restrictions to apply.

Right to Receive Confidential Communications: You have the right to request that you receive communications regarding PHI in a certain manner or at a certain location. For example, you may request that we contact you at home, rather than at work. You must make your request in writing. You must specify how you would like to be contacted (for example, by regular mail to your post office box and not your home). We are required to accommodate only *reasonable* requests.

Right to Inspect and Copy: You have the right to request the opportunity to inspect and receive a copy of PHI about you in certain records that we maintain. This includes your medical and billing records but does not include psychotherapy notes or information gathered or prepared for a civil, criminal, or administrative proceeding. We may deny your request to inspect and copy PHI only in limited circumstances. To inspect and copy PHI, please contact our Privacy Official. If you request a copy of PHI about you, we may charge you a reasonable fee for the copying, postage, labor, and supplies used in meeting your request.

Right to Amend: You have the right to request that we amend PHI about you as long as such information is kept by or for our office. To make this type of request, you must submit your request in writing to our Privacy Official. You must also give us a reason for your request. We may deny your request in certain cases, including if it is not in writing or if you do not give us a reason for the request.

Right to Receive an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request an "accounting" of certain disclosures that we have made of PHI about you. This is a list of disclosures made by us during a specified period of up to 6 years, *other than* disclosures made: for treatment, payment, and health care operations; for use in or related to a facility directory; to family members or friends involved in your care; to you directly; pursuant to an authorization of you or your personal representative; for certain notification purposes (including national security, intelligence, correctional, and law enforcement purposes); as incidental disclosures that occur as a result of otherwise permitted disclosures; as part of a limited data set of information that does not directly identify you; and before April 14, 2003. If you wish to make such a request, please contact our Privacy Official identified on the last page of this Notice. The first list that you request in a 12-month period will be free, but we may charge you for our reasonable costs of providing additional lists in the same 12-month period. We will tell you about these costs, and you may choose to cancel your request at any time before costs are incurred.

Right to a Paper Copy of this Notice: You have a right to receive a paper copy of this Notice at any time. You are entitled to a paper copy of this Notice even if you have previously agreed to receive this Notice electronically. To obtain a paper copy of this Notice, please contact our Privacy Official listed in this Notice.

IV. COMPLAINTS

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with us or the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our office, please contact our Privacy Official at the address and number listed below. We will not retaliate or take action against you for filing a complaint.

V. QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about this Notice, please contact our Privacy Official at the address and telephone number listed below.

VI. PRIVACY OFFICIAL CONTACT INFORMATION

You may contact our Privacy Official at the following address and phone number:

Privacy Official	Duane N. Hill
Address	3650 Laurel Avenue, Beaumont, TX 77707
Telephone	409-838-0346

This notice was published and first became effective on **APRIL 14, 2003.**