

Notice of Privacy Practices for Lone Star Allergy & Asthma Center, P.A.

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

Our Promise to You

Federal regulations developed under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that all medical practices provide you with this Notice Regarding Privacy of Personal Health Information. The Notice describes (1) how the practice may use and disclose your protected health information, (2) your rights to access and control your protected health information in certain circumstances, and (3) the practices' duties and contact information. We promise to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices.

Protected Health Information

"Protected health information" is health information created or received by your health care provider that contains information that may be used to identify you. It also includes written or oral health information that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health; the provision of health care to you; and your past, present, or future payment for health care.

The Use and Disclosure of Protected Health Information

Your protected health information may be used and disclosed by the practice in the course of providing treatment, obtaining payment for treatment, and conducting health care operations. Any disclosures may be made in writing, electronically, by facsimile, or orally. The practice may also use or disclose your protected health information in other circumstances if you authorize the use or disclosure, or if state law or the HIPAA privacy regulations authorize the use or disclosure.

Treatment

The practice may use and disclose your protected health information in the course of providing or managing your health care as well as any related services. For the purpose of treatment, the practice may coordinate your health care with a third party. For example, we may disclose protected health information to other health care providers to get treatment activities of those providers or to an X-ray facility in order to obtain a CT scan of your sinuses. Also, since the physician in this practice is a specialist, we may provide your primary care physician information about your particular condition so that her or she can appropriately treat you for other medical conditions, if any.

Payment

When needed, the practice will use or disclose your protected health information to obtain payment for its services. Such uses or disclosures may include disclosures to your health insurance company to get approval for a recommended treatment or to determine whether you are eligible for benefits or whether a particular service is covered under your health plan. When obtaining payment for your health care, the practice may also disclose your protected health information to your insurance company to demonstrate the medical necessity of the care or for utilization review when required to do so by your insurance company.

Health Care Operations

The practice may use or disclose your protected health information when needed for the practice's health care operations for the purposes of management or administration of the practice and of offering quality health care services. Health care operations may include: (1) quality evaluations and improvement activities; (2) employee review activities and training programs; (3) accreditation, certification, licensing, or credentialing activities; (4) reviews and audits such as compliance reviews, medical reviews, legal services, and maintaining compliance

programs; and (5) business management and general administrative activities. For example, the practice may use your protected health information to evaluate our performance so that we may ensure that only the best health care is provided to our patients by this practice. In addition, the practice may disclose your protected health information to another provider or health plan for their health care operations.

Other Uses and Disclosures

As part of treatment, payment, and healthcare operations, the practice may also use or disclose your protected health information to: (1) remind you of an appointment; (2) inform you of potential treatment alternatives or options; or (3) inform you of health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.

Additional Uses and Disclosures Permitted Without Your Authorization

In addition to treatment, payment, and health care operations, there are certain circumstances in which the practice is permitted by law to disclose or use your protected health information without your permission or an opportunity to object. These circumstances include:

1. When Legally Required

Lone Star Allergy & Asthma Center will comply with any federal, state, or local law that requires it to disclose your protected health information.

2. When There are Risks to Public Health

The practice may disclose your protected health information for public health activities. Public health activities are mandated by federal, state, and local government for the collection of information about disease, vital statistics (like birth and death), or injury by a public health authority. To notify a person who has been exposed to a contagious disease or who may be at risk of contracting or spreading a disease. We may also disclose your medical information to report adverse events related to medications or products and to notify people of recalls of products they may be using.

3. To Report Abuse, Neglect or Domestic Violence

As required or authorized by law or with the patient's agreement, the practice may inform government authorities if it is believed that a patient is the victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence.

4. To Conduct Health Oversight Activities

The practice may disclose your protected health information to a health oversight agency for those activities authorized by law. Examples of these activities are (1) audits; (2) civil, administrative, or criminal investigations, proceedings or actions; (3) inspections; (4) licensure or disciplinary actions; or (5) other government activities undertaken to monitor the health care delivery system and compliance with other laws.

5. For Judicial and Administrative Proceedings

The practice may disclose your protected health information for any judicial or administrative proceeding if the disclosure is expressly authorized by an order of a court or administrative tribunal as expressly authorized by such order or a signed authorization is provided.

6. For Law Enforcement Purposes

The practice may disclose your protected health information to a law enforcement official for law enforcement purposes when:

- (1) Required by law to report certain types of physical injuries;
- (2) Required by court order, court-ordered warrant, subpoena, summons or similar process;
- (3) Needed to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness or missing person;
- (4) Needed to report a crime in an emergency situation; and
- (5) Pertains to a victim of crime and you are incapacitated.

7. To Coroners, Funeral Directors, and for Organ Donation

The practice may disclose protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner for the purpose of (1) identification, (2) determination of cause of death, or (3) performance of the coroner or medical examiner's other duties as authorized by law. In addition, as permitted by law, the practice may disclose protected health information, including when death is reasonably anticipated, to a funeral director to enable the funeral director to carry out his or her duties. Protected health information may also be used and disclosed to organ procurement organizations for the purpose of facilitating organ, eye or tissue donation if you are a donor.

8. For Research Purposes

The practice may use or disclose your protected health information for research if such use or disclosure has been approved by an institutional review board or privacy board that has examined the research proposal and the research protocols which maintain the privacy of your protected health information.

9. To Prevent or Diminish a Serious and Imminent Threat to Health or Safety

If in good faith the practice believes that use or disclosure of your protected health information is necessary to prevent or diminish a serious and imminent threat to your health or safety or to the health and safety of the public, the practice may use or disclose your protected health information as permitted under law and consistent with ethical standards of conduct.

10. For Special Government Functions

As authorized by the HIPAA privacy regulations, the practice may use or disclose your protected health information to facilitate specified government functions relating to military and veterans activities, national security and intelligence activities, protective services for the President and others, medical suitability determinations, correctional institutions, and law enforcement custodial situations.

11. For Workers' Compensation

The practice may disclose your protected health information to comply with the Texas Workers' Compensation laws or similar programs.

Uses and Disclosures Permitted With an Opportunity to Object

Subject to your objection, the practice may disclose your protected health information (1) to a family member or close personal friend if the disclosure is directly relevant to the person's involvement in your care or payment related to your care; or (2) when attempting to locate or notify family members or others involved in your care to inform them of your location, condition or death. The practice will inform you orally or in writing of such uses and disclosures of your protected health information as well as provide you with an opportunity to object in advance. Your agreement or objection to the uses and disclosures can be oral or in writing. If you do not object to these disclosures, the practice is able to infer from the circumstances that you do not object, or the practice determines, in its professional judgment, that it is in your best interests for the practice to disclose information that is directly relevant to the person's involvement with your care, then the practice may disclose your protected health information. If you are incapacitated or in an emergency situation, the practice may exercise its professional judgment to determine if the disclosure is in your best interests and, if such a determination is made, may only disclose information directly relevant to your health care.

Uses and Disclosures Authorized by You

Other than the circumstances described above, the practice will not disclose your health information unless you provide written authorization. You may revoke your authorization in writing at any time except to the extent that the practice has taken action in reliance upon your prior consent.

Your Rights Under Federal Privacy Regulations

You have certain rights regarding your protected health information under the HIPAA privacy regulations. These rights include:

I. The Right to Inspect and Copy Your Protected Health Information

For as long as the practice holds your protected health information, you may inspect and obtain a copy of such information included in a designated record set. A "designated record set" contains medical and billing records as well as any other records that your physician and the practice uses to make decisions regarding the services provided to you. Texas law requires that we are ready to provide copies or a narrative within 15 days of your request.

The practice may deny your request to inspect or copy your protected health information if the practice determines in its professional judgment that the access requested is likely to endanger your life or safety or that of another person, or that it is likely to cause substantial harm to another person referred to in the information. You have the right to request a review of this decision. Another licensed health care provider who was not involved in the prior decision to deny access will make any such review.

In addition, you may not inspect or copy certain records by law, including: (1) information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or for use in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding; and (2) protected health information that is subject to a law that prohibits access to protected health information. You may have the right to have a decision to deny access reviewed in some situations.

You must submit a written request to the practice's Privacy Officer to inspect and copy your health information. The practice may charge you a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, or other costs incurred by the practice in complying with your request. The Texas State Board of Medical Examiners has set limits on fees for copies of medical records that under some circumstances may be lower than the charges permitted by HIPAA. In any event, the lower of the fee permitted by HIPAA or the fee permitted by the Texas State Board will be charged. Please contact our Privacy Officer if you have questions about access to your medical record at the number given on the last pages of this Notice.

II. The Right to Request a Restriction on Uses and Disclosures of Your Protected Health Information

You may request that the practice not use or disclose specific sections of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment, or health care operations. Additionally, you may request that the practice not disclose your health information to family members or friends who may be involved in your care or for notification purposes as described in this Notice. In your request, you must specify the scope of restriction requested as well as the individuals for which you want the restriction to apply. Your request should be directed to the practice's Privacy Officer.

The practice may choose to deny your request for a restriction, in which case the practice will notify you of its decision. Once the practice agrees to the requested restriction, the practice may not violate that restriction unless use or disclosure of the relevant information is needed to provide emergency treatment. The practice may terminate the agreement to a restriction in some instances.

III. The Right to Receive Confidential Communications from the Practice by Alternative Means

You have the right to request that the practice communicates with you through alternative means (e.g., e-mail) or at an alternative location. The practice will make every effort to comply with reasonable requests. However, the practice may condition its compliance by asking you for information regarding the procurement of payment or specific information regarding an alternative address or other method of contact. You are not required to provide an explanation for your request. Requests should be made in writing to the practice's Privacy Officer.

IV. The Right to Request an Amendment of Your Protected Health Information

During the time that the practice holds your protected health information, you may request an amendment of your information in a designated record set. We will respond within 60 days of your request. The practice may deny your request for an amendment if the information:

- (1) Was not created by this practice or the physician's here in this practice;
- (2) Is not part of the designated record set;
- (3) Is not available for inspection because of an appropriate denial;
- (4) If the information is accurate and complete.

However, should the practice deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with the practice. In turn, the practice may develop a rebuttal to your statement. If it does so, the practice will provide you with a copy of the rebuttal. Requests for amendment must be submitted in writing to the practice's Privacy Officer. Your written request must supply a reason to support the requested amendments.

V. The Right to Request an Accounting of Certain Disclosures

You have the right to request an accounting of the practice's disclosures of your protected health information made for purposes other than treatment, payment, or health care operations as described in this Notice. The practice is not required to account for disclosures (1) which you requested, (2) which you authorized by signing an authorization form, (3) for a facility directory, (4) to friends or family members involved in your care, and (5) certain other disclosures the practice is permitted to make without your authorization. The request for an accounting must be made in writing to our Privacy Officer and should state the time period for which you wish the accounting to include up to a six year period. The practice will not charge you for the first accounting you request of any 12-month period. Subsequent accountings may require a fee based on the practice's reasonable costs for compliance of the request.

VI. The Right to Obtain a Paper Copy of this Notice

The practice will provide a separate paper copy of this Notice upon request even if you have already been given a copy of it or have agreed to review it electronically.

Lone Star Allergy & Asthma Center's Duties

The practice is required to ensure the privacy of your health information and to provide you with this Notice of your rights and the practice's duties and procedures regarding your privacy. The practice must abide by the terms of this Notice, as may be amended periodically. The practice reserves the right to change the terms of this Notice and to make the new Notice provisions effective for all protected health information that the practice collects and maintains. If the practice alters its Notice, the practice will provide a copy of the revised Notice through regular mail or posted in the office where it can be seen.

Complaints

If you are concerned that your privacy rights have been violated, you have the right to relate complaints to the practice and to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. You may provide complaints to the practice verbally or in writing. Such complaints should be directed to the practice's Privacy Officer. The practice encourages you to relate any concerns you may have regarding the privacy of your information and you will not be retaliated against in any way for filing a complaint. The contact information for the United States Department of Health and Human Resources is:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources
HIPAA Complaint
7500 Security Blvd., C5-24-04
Baltimore, MD 21244

Contact Person

The practice's contact person regarding the practice's duties and your rights under the HIPAA privacy regulations is the Privacy Officer. The Privacy Officer can provide information regarding issues related to this Notice by request. Complaints to the practice should be directed to the Privacy Officer at the following address:

Lone Star Allergy & Asthma Center, P.A.
Attn: Privacy Officer
3304 Colorado Blvd., Suite 201
Denton, TX 76210-6873
Phone: (940) 565-5900
Fax: (940) 565-0700