

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.

Uses and Disclosures:

Each time you visit a hospital, physician, or other health care provider, a record of your visit is made. Typically this record contains your symptoms, examination and test results, diagnoses, treatment, and a plan for future care or treatment. This information, often referred to as your health or medical record, serves several purposes. At Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, these include:

Treatment:

- Basis for planning your care and treatment
- Communication among the many health professionals who contribute to your care
- A record of your medical history from which you can obtain a copy to transfer to another health professional

Payment:

- Business office can use your health information to bill you or your insurance company for services provided
- Business office can use your health information to verify you have insurance coverage and what your insurance will cover
- Assignment of benefits will be to the health care provider, as appropriate
- A collections agency can use your health information in their efforts to obtain payment of unpaid medical bills from our office

Health Care Operations:

- Means to educate allied health professionals
- A source of information for public health officials charged with improving the health of the nation
- A tool with which we can assess and continually work to improve the care we render and the outcomes we achieve
- Business office can use your health information to audit the billing process to detect and prevent fraud and abuse

Uses and Disclosures Unique to Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA:

- We may contact you to provide appointment reminders, insurance co-pay, and account balance reminders.

- If the practice is sold, all patient records will be transferred to the new owner(s).
- Product vendors who visit the facility may recommend their products for certain classes of individuals (for example, pharmaceutical representatives).
- We will infer that you agree to the release of your protected health information, as appropriate, to your spouse or a friend if either of them accompany you to the office for your appointment.
- We may leave telephone messages about normal labwork, excluding HIV or sexually transmitted diseases information.

Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, may also use and/or give out your health information for the following reasons:

- As required by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. This could be as part of an investigation or to determine if we are obeying the law.
- Protected information may be disclosed in the course of certain judicial or administrative proceedings.
- Medical information may be disclosed for law enforcement purposes or other specialized governmental functions.
- Your protected information may be disclosed as authorized by laws relating to workers' compensation or similar programs.

Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, will not use or disclose your protected information for any other purpose without your written authorization. Once given, you may reverse your authorization in writing at any time.

Individual Rights

You have the following rights regarding your protected health information:

- You may request restrictions in writing on certain uses and disclosures of your protected information. Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, is not required to agree to your requested restriction.
- You have the right to receive communications from Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, in a confidential manner.
- You have the right to inspect and copy your medical information. This right is subject to certain specific exceptions and you may be charged a reasonable fee for any copies, mailing, and/or summarizing of your records.
- You have the right to request an amendment of your medical information. The request must be in writing and must include a reason that the amendment be included. Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, may deny your request for certain specific reasons. If denied, the organization will provide you with a written explanation for the denial and information regarding further rights you would have at that point.
- You have the right to receive a record of the disclosures of your medical information made by Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, in the six years prior

to your request, except for disclosures for treatment and/or payment, and for certain other specific disclosure types.

- You have the right to request a paper copy of this Notice of Privacy Practices for Protected Health Information.

Our Duties

Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, is dedicated to protecting your medical information. We are required by law to maintain the privacy of protected health information and to provide you with this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices regarding protected health information. Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, is required by law to abide by the terms of this Notice, and we reserve the right to change the terms of this Notice and any revision will apply to all the protected health information we maintain. If Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, revises the terms of this Notice, we will post a revised notice and will make paper copies of this Notice of Privacy Practices for Protected Health Information available upon request.

Complaints

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you have the right to complain to Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, and/or to the United States Department of Health and Human Services. To complain to Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, please contact the organization's Privacy Officer at 850 785-3799 or by writing to Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, at 1827 Harrison Avenue, Panama City, FL, 32405. If you choose to file a complaint, you will not be retaliated against in any way.

Contact Information

If you would like further information regarding your rights or regarding the uses and disclosures of your protected health information, you may contact Southern Orthopedic Specialists, PA, 's Privacy Officer at 850 785-3799.

Effective Date

This Notice is effective as of April 14, 2003.