



NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Effective Date: 8/3/2023

As required by the privacy regulations created as a result of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).

This Notice describes how medical information about you (as a patient of this practice) may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

Our Commitment to Your Privacy

Western Optometric Center is committed to protecting the privacy of your protected health information. In conducting our business, we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide to you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of your protected health information (PHI) and to provide you with this Notice explaining our legal duties and privacy practices. By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the Notice of Privacy Practices that we have in effect at the time.

The terms of this notice apply to all records containing your PHI that are created or retained by our practice. We reserve the right to revise or amend this Notice of Privacy Practices. Any revision or amendment to this notice will be effective for all of your records that our practice has created or maintained in the past, and for any of your records that we may create or maintain in the future. Our practice will post a copy of our current Notice in our offices in a visible location at all times, and you may request a copy of our most current Notice at any time.

How We May Use and Disclose Your Health Information

We may use and share your health information for the following purposes without your written authorization:

Treatment

We may use your PHI to provide, coordinate, or manage your eye care. This includes sharing information with other healthcare providers involved in your care, such as primary care physicians, ophthalmologists, or pharmacies. Additionally, we may disclose your PHI to others who may assist in your care, such as your spouse, children, or parents.

Payment

We may use and disclose your PHI to bill and receive payment from insurance companies or other third parties. For example, we may contact your vision or health insurer to certify that you are eligible for benefits (and for what range of benefits), and we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover, or pay for, your treatment. This may include verifying coverage, submitting claims, and responding to billing questions. Also, we may use your PHI to bill you directly for

services and items. We may disclose your PHI to other healthcare providers and entities to assist in their billing and collection efforts.

Healthcare Operations

Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to operate our business. We may use your information to support our practice operations, such as quality assessment, staff training, business planning, and compliance activities.

- **Appointment reminders.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment
- **Treatment options.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of potential treatment options or alternatives
- **Health-related benefits and services.** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you.
- **Release of information to family/friends.** Our practice may release your PHI to a friend or family member that is involved in your care, or who assists in taking care of you.
- **Disclosures required by law.** Our practice will use and disclose your PHI when we are required to do so by federal, state, or local law.

Other Permitted or Required Uses and Disclosures

The following categories describe unique scenarios in which we may use or disclose your identifiable health information:

1. **Public Health Risks:** Our practice may disclose your PHI to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information for the purpose of:
 - a. Maintaining vital records, such as births and deaths
 - b. Reporting child abuse or neglect,
 - c. Preventing or controlling disease, injury, or disability,
 - d. Notifying a person regarding potential exposure to a communicable disease,
 - e. Notifying a person regarding a potential risk for spreading or contracting a disease or condition,
 - f. Reporting reactions to drugs or problems with products or devices
 - g. Notifying individuals if a product or device they may be using has been recalled,
 - h. Notifying appropriate government agency(ies) and authority(ies) regarding the potential abuse or neglect of an adult patient (including domestic violence); however, we will only disclose this information if the patient agrees or we are required or authorized by law to disclose this information,
 - i. Notifying your employer under limited circumstances related primarily to workplace injury or illness or medical surveillance
2. **Health Oversight Activities:** Our practice may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. Oversight activities can include, for example, investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil, administrative and criminal procedures or actions; or other activities necessary for the government to monitor government programs, compliance with civil rights laws and the health care system in general.
3. **Lawsuits and Similar Proceedings:** Our practice may use and disclose you PHI in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We also may disclose your PHI in response to a discovery request, subpoena, or other lawful process by another party involved in the dispute, but only if we have made an effort to inform you of the request or to obtain an

order protecting the information the party has requested.

4. **Law Enforcement:** We may release PHI if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:
 - a. Regarding a crime victim in certain situations, if we are unable to obtain the person's agreement,
 - b. Concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct,
 - c. Regarding criminal conduct at our offices,
 - d. In response to a warrant, summons, court order, subpoena, or similar legal processes,
 - e. To identify/locate a suspect, material witness, fugitive, or missing person,
 - f. In an emergency, to report a crime (including the location or victim(s) of the crime, or the description, identity or location of the perpetrator)
5. **Serious Threats to Health or Safety:** Our practice may use and disclose your PHI when necessary to reduce or prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.
6. **Military:** Our practice may disclose your PHI if you are a member of U.S. or foreign military forces (including veterans) and if required by the appropriate authorities.
7. **National Security:** Our practice may disclose your PHI to federal officials for intelligence and national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose your PHI to federal officials in order to protect the president, other officials or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.
8. **Inmates:** Our practice may disclose your PHI to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials if you are an inmate or under the custody of a law enforcement official. Disclosure for these purposes would be necessary:
 - a. For the institution to provide health care services to you
 - b. For the safety and security of the institution
 - c. and/or to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of other individuals
9. **Workers Compensation:** Our practice may release your PHI for workers' compensation and similar programs

Uses and Disclosures Requiring Your Authorization

We will obtain your written authorization before using or disclosing your health information for purposes not described in this Notice. You may revoke your authorization in writing at any time.

Your Rights Regarding Your Health Information

You have the right to:

Access and Copies

You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the PHI that may be used to make decisions about you, including patient medical records and billing records. You must submit your request in writing to your office in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your PHI. Our practice may charge a fee for the costs of copying, mailing, labor, and supplies associated with your request. Our practice may deny your request to inspect and/or copy in certain limited circumstances; however, you may request a review of our denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by us will conduct reviews.

Amendments

You may ask us to amend your health information if you believe it is incorrect or incomplete, and you may request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our practice. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to our office. You must provide us with a reason that supports your request for amendment. Our practice will deny your request if you fail to submit your request (and the reason supporting your request) in writing. Also, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that is in our opinion:

- Accurate and complete
- Not part of the PHI kept by or for the practice
- Not part of the PHI which you would be permitted to inspect and copy
- Or, not created by our practice, unless the individual or entity that created the information is not available to amend the information.

Accounting of Disclosures

All of our patients have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” An “accounting of disclosures” is a list of certain non-routine disclosures our practice has made of your PHI for purposes not related to treatment, payment, or operations. Use of your PHI as part of the routine patient care in our practice is not required to be documented - for example, the doctor sharing information with the billing department using your information to file your insurance claim. In order to obtain an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to our office. All requests for an “accounting of disclosures” must state a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years from the date of disclosure. The first list your request with a 12-month period is free of charge, but our practice may charge you for additional lists within the same 12-month period. Our practice will notify you of the costs involved with additional requests, and you may withdraw your request before you incur any costs.

Confidential Communications

You have the right to request that our practice communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular manner or at a certain location. For instance, you may ask that we contact you at home, rather than work. In order to request a type of confidential communication, you must make a written request to our office specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. Our practice will accommodate reasonable requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.

Restrictions

You have a right to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI for treatment, payment, or health care operations. Additionally, you have the right to request that we restrict our disclosure of your PHI to only certain individuals involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as family members and friends. We are not required to agree to your request; however, if we do agree, we are bound by our agreement except when otherwise required by law, in emergencies, or when the information is necessary to treat you. In order to request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI, you must make your request in writing to our office. Your request must describe in clear and concise fashion:

- The information you wish restricted,
- Whether you are requesting to limit our practice’s use, disclosure, or both,
- To whom you want the limits to apply to

Paper Copy

You are entitled to receive a paper copy of our notice of privacy practices. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice, contact our office.

File a Complaint

If you believe that your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our practice, with the California Department of Public Health, or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our practice, contact Carlene Chater at (323) 469-1929 or e-mail TanyaChaljjanOD@WesternOptometric.com. All complaints must be submitted in writing. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

Provide an Authorization for Other Uses and Disclosures

Our practice will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures that are not identified by this notice or permitted by applicable law. Any authorization you provide us regarding the use and disclosure of your PHI may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your PHI for the reasons described in the authorization. *Please note:* we are required to retain records of your care.

Our Responsibilities

We are required by law to:

- Maintain the privacy and security of your health information
- Notify you if a breach occurs that may compromise your information
- Follow the terms of this Notice

We reserve the right to change this Notice and will make the updated version available in our office and on our website.

Contact Information

If you have questions regarding this notice or our health information privacy practices, please contact:

Tanya Chaljian
237 N. Western Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90004
(323) 469-1929