

PRIVACY NOTICE

April 14, 2003

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

The Department of Health and Human Services has created a floor of national protections for the privacy of your health information. These standards for privacy protection are a provision of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and are currently the only national standards in place which guarantee patients privacy, access to health information and control over how health information may be utilized. All of your health care providers are required to come into compliance with HIPAA by April 14, 2003. Compliance includes providing you with a written notice describing your legal rights as well as the general privacy policies implemented in the office.

Consultants in General Surgery, S. C. may disclose your protected health information without your authorization for only three purposes: 1) treatment, 2) payment, 3) health care operations. **All other disclosures require your specific, written authorization.**

Disclosures of your health information for treatment purposes includes disclosures to your other health care providers for coordination of your care, communicating recommendations for medical management and facilitating continuity of your care. Consultants in General Surgery, S.C. limits disclosures for treatment purposes to providers readily identified or reasonably expected to be involved in your health care. Prior to releasing your health records to unknown providers, you would be contacted and asked to forward a written request and instructions for the disclosure.

Disclosures made for payment purposes includes the release of information to your health insurance carrier to the end of obtaining benefits for services rendered by Consultants in General Surgery, S.C. physicians, billing and collection activities.

Activities included in health care operations are strictly internal functions pertaining to quality assessments, outcome evaluations, staff training, legal and auditing functions and business planning. Consultants in General Surgery, S.C., additionally, will use your name and telephone number for the purpose of contacting you with a reminder of any upcoming appointments. The scope of health care operations **does not include** marketing or advertising activities.

The extent of information released is limited to the minimum disclosure necessary to accomplish the task. This means that your health record will not be copied in its entirety and freely distributed to the entity seeking information. Exceptions to

the minimum necessary rule are disclosures made to your other treating health care providers, disclosures to you directly, mandatory disclosures to federal agencies (i.e. The Department of Health and Human Services) for evaluating our compliance with the privacy regulations, and disclosures required by law (court order, subpoenas, etc.). Under these circumstances, the record will be provided in its entirety or as requested. In a workers compensation action, records relative to the injury/accident only will be released to the employer or their agent. An accounting of all disclosures made with regard to your health information will be maintained in your chart and will be available for your review.

You have the right to restrict the use of your health information at any time in writing. Restrictions, however, may impact your continuity of care, insurance benefits and our ability to communicate treatment alternatives or conduct quality assessments. While it is required that you are provided with the opportunity to limit the use of your health information, your physician is not obligated to honor the restrictions you request. In the event your restrictions are refused, you will be provided with a detailed, written communication explaining the basis for the refusal. Thereafter, you have the right to dispute the decision (once again, in writing). These communications will be maintained as a permanent part of your record. If your request for restriction is accepted, the restriction is binding until such time as you revoke or revise it in writing. Restriction request forms are available in the office.

You are also entitled to review the contents of your medical and billing records; and you have the right to make written request for amendments or alterations. The physician, again, is not required to comply with your request for amendment; however, the request itself must be retained as part of your record. You are entitled to receive a copy of your record, although a fee will be imposed for providing that to you. As of September 1, 2001, the State of Illinois Public Act 92-0228 places a restriction on copying fees for health records. Consequently, the following charges apply to copying your medical chart:

1. First copy to patient – no charge
2. Each additional patient request or copies to others:
 - \$20.00 handling fee, plus
 - \$0.75 per page for the first 25 pages
 - \$0.50 per page for the next 25 pages (26-50)
 - \$0.25 per page for each page in excess of 50

Consultants in General Surgery, S.C. is required by law to comply with the federal standards established to protect your health information and your privacy. If you believe any member of our staff has compromised your privacy, you may ask to speak with the privacy officer or the office manager to file a formal complaint. You may also file a complaint with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) directly. We encourage you to become an active participant in protecting your health information and hereby make you

aware there are no punitive consequences for filing a grievance either with our office or with the DHHS.

Consultants in General Surgery, S.C. reserve the right to change privacy policies in accordance with the terms of the standards. New or updated notices will be posted in our waiting room or on our web site as changes become necessary to comply with federal standards.

If you have any questions regarding your privacy rights, please contact our office. Additional information regarding the final privacy regulations can also be obtained by contacting the Department of Health and Human Services at their web site www.hhs.gov or by contacting the office of the DHHS region 5 director at 233 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60601, (312) 353-5160.