

Notice of Privacy Practices

All of the office personnel of Roy A. Meals, MD, Inc strongly believe in doing everything we can to protect the privacy and security of our patients' health information and records.

The Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) sets federal standards for the privacy and security of patient information for all healthcare providers, plans, insurance companies and anybody we do business with. HIPAA gives the patient more access to and control over his/her health information than before. Please review these rights and ask us any questions you may have.

Control over your health information

All healthcare providers are now required to give you a written explanation of how we use and disclose your personal health information before we can treat you. This way, you can decide if we are doing everything we should do to protect your privacy before you choose Dr. Meals as your doctor. As required by HIPAA, we have posted laminated copies of our Notice of Privacy Practices in the waiting area. This notice details how we secure the privacy of patient information.

We must get your signature for non-routine uses and disclosures of your information. A non-routine use is any situation not directly related to treatment, payment or operations. For example, if your disability insurance company or gym requests your medical information from us, you will need to authorize us to release this information. You have the right to say no, and you do not have to tell anyone why. Authorizations of non-routine information are one-time only, case by case, for the use defined by you.

Access to your health information

You can get copies of your medical records simply by asking for them. Health care providers are required to get you a copy of your records within 60 days of your request. There may be a cost for this service.

We must give you a history of non-routine disclosures if you ask for it. All you need to do is ask for the record and we will provide it. No justification is needed. You can also amend your medical records. You cannot change the existing record, but you can add notes or comment on any procedures, treatments or operations. This way, you can be sure that your records reflect your side of the story about treatment and payment issues. I have the right to respond to your amendment.

Patient recourse if privacy protections are violated

If you feel that your privacy has been violated, report the incident immediately to Janet, our Privacy Officer. You also have the right to report any violation to the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20201. If you decide to file a grievance either with us or with the Department of Health and Human Services, we are not allowed to discriminate or retaliate against you in any way.

Aside from these new rights to access and control of your medical information under HIPAA, there are also clear limits on all health care providers regarding how we disclose medical information. Here are some of the key aspects of these limits.

We must ensure that health information is not used for non-health purposes. Health information (covered by the privacy rules) generally may not be used for purposes not related to health care—such as disclosures to employers to make personnel decisions or to financial institutions without your explicit authorization.

There are clear, strong protections against using health information for marketing. The privacy rules set new definitions, restrictions and limits on the use of patient information for certain marketing purposes. We must get your specific authorization before sending you any materials other than those related to treatment. For instance, we will not release your name to commercial vendors.

When we release information at your request, we will release only the minimum amount of information necessary for the requested use, for instance participation at a gym. This does not apply to disclosure of records for treatment purposes, because doctors, therapists and other providers may need access to your full record to provide quality care.

Exceptions

There are situations where we may not have to follow these privacy rules. They include: emergency circumstances, identification of a body or the cause of death, public health needs, judicial and administrative proceedings, limited law enforcement activities, and activities related to national defense and security.

We understand your right to have your medical information kept confidential.