

Waco Cardiology Associates Notice of Privacy Practices

Please review this notice carefully. If you have any questions about this Notice, please contact our Privacy Contact.

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your protected health information to carry out treatment, payment or health care operations and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law. It also describes your rights to access and control your protected health information. "Protected health information" is information about you, including demographic information, that may identify you and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services.

You can request a copy of this notice at any time. We may change the terms of our notice at any time. The new notice will be effective for all protected health information that we maintain at that time. The revised notice will be available to you.

Following are examples of the types of uses and disclosures of your protected health care information that Waco Cardiology Associates is permitted to make. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but to describe the types of uses and disclosures that may be made by our office.

Treatment, Payment, Health Care Operations

Treatment: We will use and disclose your protected health information to provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and any related services. This includes the coordination or management of your health care with a third party. For example, we would disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to a home health agency that provides care to you. We will also disclose protected health information to other physicians who may be involved in your care. For example, your protected health information may be provided to a physician to whom you have been referred to ensure that the physician has the necessary information to diagnose or treat you.

In addition, we may disclose your protected health information to another physician or health care provider (e.g., a specialist or laboratory) who, at the request of your physician, becomes involved in your care by providing assistance with your health care diagnosis or treatment to your physician.

Payment: Your protected health information will be used, as needed, to obtain payment for your health care services. This may include certain activities that your health insurance plan may undertake before it approves or pays for the health care services we recommend for you such as; making a determination of eligibility or coverage for insurance benefits, reviewing services provided to you for medical necessity, and undertaking utilization review activities. For example, obtaining approval for a hospital stay may require that your relevant protected health information be disclosed to the health plan to obtain approval for the hospital admission. You have the right to request restrictions on disclosure of protected health information to your health plan for health services paid by you out-of-pocket in full, and we will comply with your request.

Healthcare Operations: We may use or disclose, as-needed, your protected health information in order to support the business activities of your physician's practice. These activities include, but are not limited to, quality assessment activities, employee review activities, training of medical students.

For example, we may disclose your protected health information to medical school students that see patients at our office. In addition, we may use a sign-in sheet at the registration desk where you will be asked to sign your name and indicate your physician. We may also call you by name in the waiting room when your physician is ready to see you. We may use or disclose your protected health information, as necessary, to contact you to remind you of your appointment.

We will share your protected health information with third party "business associates" that perform various activities (e.g., billing, transcription services) for the practice. Whenever an arrangement between our office and a business associate involves the use or disclosure of your protected health information, we will have a written contract that contains terms that will protect the privacy of your protected health information.

Uses and disclosures of protected health information for marketing purposes, including subsidized treatment communications, and disclosures that constitute the sale of protected health information, will require your authorization. We may contact you for fundraising purposes, however, you have the right to opt out of receiving these communications by contacting our Privacy Contact.

Uses and Disclosures of Protected Health Information Made with Your Written Authorization

Other uses and disclosures of your protected health information not described in this notice will be made only with your written authorization, unless otherwise permitted or required by law as described below. You may revoke this authorization, at any time, in writing, except to the extent that your physician or the physician's practice has taken an action in reliance on the use or disclosure indicated in the authorization. Revocation forms will be available at the front desk.

Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures to Which You May Agree or Object

We may use and disclose your protected health information in the following instances, however, you have the opportunity to agree or object to the use or disclosure of all or part of your protected health information. If you are not present or able to agree or object to the use or disclosure of the protected health information, then your physician may, using professional judgment, determine whether the disclosure is in your best interest. In this case, only the protected health information that is relevant to your health care will be disclosed.

Facility Directories: Unless you object, we may confirm your presence at Waco Cardiology Associates (WCA). This will be disclosed only to people that ask for you by name.

Others Involved in Your Healthcare: Unless you object, we may disclose to a member of your family, a relative, a close friend or any other person you identify, your protected health information that directly relates to that person's involvement in your health care. If you are unable to agree or object to such a disclosure, we may disclose such information as necessary if we determine that it is in your best interest based on our professional judgment. We may use or disclose protected health information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, personal representative or any other person that is responsible for your care of your location, general condition or death. Finally, we may use or disclose your protected health information to an authorized public or private entity to assist in disaster relief efforts to coordinate uses and disclosures to family or other individuals involved in your health care.

Other Permitted and Required Uses and Disclosures That May Be Made Without Your Authorization or Opportunity to Agree or Object

We may use or disclose your protected health information in the following situations without your authorization or opportunity to agree or object. These situations include:

Required By Law: We may use or disclose your protected health information to the extent that the use or disclosure is required by law. The use or disclosure will be made in compliance with the law and will be limited to the relevant requirements of the law.

Public Health: We may disclose your protected health information for public health activities and purposes to a public health authority that is permitted by law to collect or receive the information. The disclosure will be made for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability. We may disclose your protected health information, if authorized by law, to a person who may have been exposed to a communicable disease or may otherwise be at risk of contracting or spreading the disease or condition. We may disclose your protected health information to a person or company required by the Food and Drug Administration to report adverse events, product defects or problems, biologic product deviations; track products; to enable product recalls; to make repairs or replacements; or to conduct post-marketing surveillance, as required.

Health Oversight: We may disclose your protected health information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, and inspections. Oversight agencies seeking this information include government agencies that oversee the health care system, government benefit programs, other government regulatory programs and civil rights laws.

Abuse or Neglect: We may disclose protected health information to a health authority that is authorized by law to receive reports of abuse or neglect. In addition, we may disclose your protected health information if we believe that you have been a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence to the governmental entity or agency authorized to receive such information. In this case, the disclosure will be made consistent with the requirements of applicable federal and state laws.

Judicial and Administrative Proceedings: We may disclose protected health information in the course of any judicial or administrative proceeding, in response to an order of a court or administrative tribunal (to the extent such disclosure is expressly authorized), and in certain conditions in response to a subpoena, discovery request or other lawful process.

Law Enforcement: We may also disclose protected health information, so long as applicable legal requirements are met, for law enforcement purposes. These law enforcement purposes include (1) legal processes and otherwise required by law, (2) limited information requests for identification and location purposes, (3) pertaining to victims of a crime, (4) suspicion that death has occurred as a result of criminal conduct, (5) in the event that a crime occurs on the premises of the practice, and (6) medical emergency (not on the Practice's premises) and it is likely that a crime has occurred.

Coroners, Medical Examiners and Funeral Directors: We may disclose protected health information to a coroner or medical examiner for identification purposes, determining cause of death or for the coroner or medical examiner to perform other duties authorized by law. We may also disclose protected health information to a funeral director, as authorized by law, in order to permit the funeral director to carry out their duties.

Research: We may disclose your protected health information to researchers when their research has been approved by an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your protected health information.

Serious Threat to Health or Safety: Consistent with applicable federal and state laws, we may disclose your protected health information if we believe that the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of a person or the public. We may also disclose protected health information if it is necessary for law enforcement authorities to identify or apprehend an individual.

Specialized Government Functions: When the appropriate conditions apply, we may use or disclose protected health information of individuals who are Armed Forces personnel (1) for activities deemed necessary by appropriate military command authorities; (2) for the purpose of a determination by the Department of Veterans Affairs of your eligibility for benefits, or (3) to foreign military authority if you are a member of that foreign military services. We may also disclose your protected health information to authorized federal officials for conducting national security and intelligence activities, and for the provision of protective services to the President or others legally authorized. We may use or disclose your protected health information if you are an inmate of a correctional facility and your physician created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

Workers' Compensation: Your protected health information may be disclosed by us as authorized to comply with workers' compensation laws and other similar legally-established programs.

Inmates: We may use or disclose your protected health information if you are an inmate of a correctional facility and your physician created or received your protected health information in the course of providing care to you.

Required Uses and Disclosures: Under the law, we must make disclosures to you and when required by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to investigate or determine our compliance with the requirements of Section 164.500 et seq.

Your Rights

Following is a statement of your rights with respect to your protected health information and a brief description of how you may exercise these rights.

You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of your protected health information.

This means you may inspect and obtain a copy of protected health information about you that is contained in a designated record set for as long as we maintain the protected health information. A "designated record set" contains medical and billing records that your physician and the practice uses for making decisions about you.

We ask that requests for copies of your protected health information be made in writing and that requests for inspection of your health information also be in writing. Please send your request to the Medical Record Department.

Under federal law, however, you may not inspect or copy the following records; psychotherapy notes; information compiled in reasonable anticipation of, or use in, a civil, criminal, or administrative action or proceeding, and protected health information that is subject to law that prohibits access to protected health information. Depending on the circumstances, a decision to deny access may be reviewable. In some circumstances, you may have a right to have this decision reviewed. Please contact our Privacy Contact if you have questions about access to your medical record.

You have the right to request a restriction of your protected health information. This means that you may ask us not to use or disclose any part of your protected health information for the purposes of treatment, payment or healthcare operations. You may also request that any part of your protected health information not be disclosed to family members or friends who may be involved in your care or for notification purposes as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices. Your request must state the specific restriction requested and to whom you want the restriction to apply.

Waco Cardiology Associates is not required to agree to a restriction that you may request. If your physician believes it is in your best interest to permit use and disclosure of our protected health information, your protected health information will not be restricted. If your physician does agree to the requested restriction, we may not use or disclose your protected health information in violation of that restriction unless it is needed to provide emergency treatment. With this in mind, please discuss any restriction you wish to request with your physician. Request a restriction from the Privacy Contact.

You have the right to request to receive confidential communications from us by alternative means or at an alternative location. We will accommodate reasonable requests. We may also condition this accommodation by asking you for information as to how payment will be handled or specification of an alternative address or other method of contact. We will not request an explanation from you as to the basis for the request. Please make this request in writing to our Privacy Contact.

You may have the right to an amendment of your protected information. This means you may request that Waco Cardiology Associates amend protected health information about you in a designated record set for as long as we maintain this information. In certain cases, we may deny your request for an amendment. If we deny your request for amendment, you have the right to file a statement of disagreement with us and we may prepare a rebuttal to your statement and will provide you with a copy of any such rebuttal. For example, we may refuse to allow an amendment in the following instances: the record was not created by our practice, the record is not part of the designated record set, or the record is accurate and complete. Please contact our Privacy Contact to determine if you have questions about requesting an amendment of your medical record.

You have the right to receive an accounting of certain disclosures we have made, if any, of your protected health information. This right applies to disclosures made by Waco Cardiology Associates on or after April 14, 2003, and applies to disclosures in the six years prior to the date on the accounting was requested, however, you may request a shorter timeframe. This accounting will include all disclosures except those: to carry out treatment, payment or healthcare operations as described in this Notice of Privacy Practices; disclosures we may have made to you; incident to a use or disclosure otherwise permitted or required; pursuant to a written authorization; for the facility directory or to family, friends or other persons involved in your care, or for notification purposes; for national security or intelligence purposes; and to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials. You also have the right to be notified in the event of a security breach of your unsecured protected health information.

Complaints

You may complain to us or to the Secretary of Health and Human Services if you believe your privacy rights have been violated by us. You may file a complaint with us by notifying our Privacy Contact of your complaint. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

You may contact our Privacy Contact for further information about the complaint process:

Vicki Beckner
Waco Cardiology Associates
7125 New Sanger Avenue
Waco, TX 76712
Phone: (254) 399-5434

This notice becomes effective on April 14, 2003.

Revised: 3/06; 1/07; 9/13