

How the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Will Affect Your Eye Care Visit

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued national health information privacy standards. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a federally mandated law known as HIPAA, is designed to:

- provide protection for the privacy of certain identifiable health data (called *protected health information [PHI]*),
- ensure health insurance coverage when changing employers, and
- provide standards for facilitating electronic transfers of health care–related information.

While the privacy of your personal PHI will remain confidential, certain aspects of this law will permit disclosures of PHI to facilitate public health activities. The following charts review the types of health data disclosure allowed under HIPAA.

PHI can be disclosed with your authorization in the following categories.

You may request a limitation or restriction on the disclosure of this information. You have the right to:

- request a restriction or limit of any of the above disclosures used for treatment, payment, or office operations.
- inspect and copy information that may be used to make decisions about your care.
- request an amendment of this information if you feel it is incorrect or incomplete.
- an accounting of disclosures we have made that were not related to treatment, payment, or operations of this office.

These requests must be submitted in writing to the office manager and you will be informed of the specifics that are required for this request.

Treatment—PHI will be used to provide appropriate treatment either by this office or other healthcare providers, diagnostic or fabrication laboratories.

Payment—PHI will be used to facilitate payment for treatment rendered. Your health plan requires this information in order to bill, collect payments, or obtain approval prior to treatment.

Healthcare Operations—In order to ensure all patients receive timely and quality care, PHI will be used to facilitate the daily operations of our practice. These include, but are not limited to:

- clinical/research studies to improve our practice
- appointment reminders by phone calls or mailings
- sign-in sheets used to notify us of your arrival
- posted appointment schedules
- information regarding your treatment options or related benefits and services
- communications with family or friends that are involved in your care or payment for your care

PHI can be disclosed without your authorization in the following categories.

As Required by Law	Judicial and Administrative Proceedings	Oversight PHI can be disclosed to a health oversight agency as authorized by law for audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure.
Public Health	Lawsuits and Disputes	Workers' Compensation PHI may be released to workers' compensation or similar programs that provide benefits for work-related injuries or illness.
Public Health Risks	Law Enforcement	Military and Veterans
Health Research PHI disclosures are permitted federal, state,	Coroners and Medical Examiners Release of PHI to officials will occur: in response when required by to a court order, subpoena, discovery request or tribal, or local laws. summons; to identify a suspected fugitive, witness, or missing person; about a victim of crime if unable to obtain permission from the person; to identify a deceased person, determine cause of death, about a death that is believed to be the result of criminal conduct; criminal conduct occurring at the practice; in emergency situations.	National Security and Intelligence Activities
Abuse, Neglect, or Domestic Violence PHI can be disclosed to prevent a health and safety or the health and safety of others.	Cadaver Organ, Eye, or Tissue Donations PHI disclosure can be made to organ banks as necessary to facilitate organ or tissue donation and transplantation.	Protective Services for the President and Others PHI may be released as authorized by law when threat to your requested by military command authorities, federal officials for national security, and protection of the president and other heads of state.