



HIPAA Patient Education

What is HIPAA?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a law passed by Congress to protect patient privacy with regards to medical records and to control the flow of health information. Also, HIPAA was designed to lower administrative costs by setting standards for the filing and processing of insurance claims. HIPAA regulations will affect people at all levels of healthcare, including patients and their physicians.

What is TPO?

Treatment, payment, and operations (TPO) include the routine processes involved in receiving healthcare. There are several examples that encompass TPO. Oftentimes it is necessary to share your health information between healthcare providers, such as providing a referral to a specialist. This is a part of **treatment**. Information about your diagnosis and other health information is required for **payment** from insurance companies. Evaluations of medical records to ensure high quality care provided by our physicians are considered part of **operations**.

Why should I care about TPO?

HIPAA legislation outlines significant differences for the handling of health information for TPO and reasons *other* than TPO. The laws created by HIPAA are designed to expedite healthcare by placing no restrictions on the sharing of your health information for TPO and severely restricting information not required for TPO (e.g. releasing information to other people, even your family members, or for marketing reasons).

How will HIPAA affect me as a patient?

HIPAA will benefit patients in many ways. For example, the Medical Clinic of North Texas, P.A. will provide all patients with information about their rights to privacy. Also, the new regulations make it illegal for healthcare providers to sell your health information to marketers and advertisers without your written authorization. As a patient, you have the right to review your medical record if you believe something is incorrect and request a change. However, only your physician can determine if your medical record is inaccurate.

Will HIPAA have any negative effects?

The intention of HIPAA legislation is to improve the level of privacy for patients. *However, the law requires the patient's written permission before his or her health information can be released for reasons other than TPO. For example, relatives can not call to the clinic and get any health information without you signing an authorization first. Please understand the clinic is working to protect the privacy of all patients and may have stricter policies for the release of such information.*

When will these changes take place?

The Medical Clinic of North Texas, P.A. must comply with HIPAA regulations by April 14, 2003. However, every clinic is working diligently to become compliant prior to the deadline.

Who should I contact if I have concerns about the privacy of my MCNT medical record?

The Medical Clinic of North Texas, P.A. has a Privacy Officer available to resolve any privacy issues. Please contact:

Stephen Eppstein, M.D.
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North Richland Hills, Texas 76180
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Thank you for helping the Medical Clinic of North Texas, P.A. in our efforts to protect the privacy of ALL our patients!