

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

This Joint Notice of Privacy Practices (Notice) applies to the following organizations:

Houston Methodist Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist Baytown Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist Clear Lake Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist Continuing Care Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist The Woodlands Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist West Houston Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital and its medical staff
Houston Methodist Primary Care Group
Houston Methodist Specialty Physician Group

This Notice identifies the general ways your protected health information can be used or disclosed. Protected health information refers to your personal health information found in your medical and billing records. This includes information, whether oral, written or recorded in electronic form, that is created or received by us and relates to your past, present, or future physical or mental health conditions or the payment for health care services. This information can be transmitted or maintained in any form by Houston Methodist.

This Notice describes your legal rights regarding your health information. It also informs you of our legal duties and privacy practices. If you receive services by your physician or a health care provider at a different location, there may be different health information privacy policies or notices, and there will be different contact information.

Houston Methodist organizations and their medical staffs participate in an Organized Health Care Arrangement under HIPAA for the purpose of sharing protected health information for treatment, payment, and health care operations. Houston Methodist hospitals and their respective Medical Staff members are independently responsible for complying with this Notice.

OUR LEGAL DUTIES

We are required, by law, to keep your identifiable health information private; provide you with this Notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to your health information; and follow the terms of the Notice as long as it is in effect. If we revise this Notice, we will follow the terms of the revised Notice, as long as it is in effect.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

The following information describes how we are permitted, or required by law, to use and disclose your health information. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed.

Treatment: We may use or disclose your health information to a physician or other health care provider in order to provide care and treatment to you. For example, a physician treating you for a broken leg may need to know if you have diabetes because diabetes may slow the healing process. Different departments at Houston Methodist also may share information about you in order to coordinate the different services you receive, such as lab work, X-rays, and prescriptions. We also may disclose health information about you to those who may be involved in your health care outside of Houston Methodist, such as physicians and others who provide you with follow-up care and medical equipment or product suppliers. We may contact you to coordinate care after discharge, provide appointment reminders and to provide you with information about health-related benefits and services at Houston Methodist, or treatment alternatives that may be of interest to you.

Payment: We may use or disclose your health information to obtain payment for services we provide to you. We may disclose your health information to another health care provider or entity. For example, Houston Methodist may need to provide your health plan with information about surgery you received so your health plan will pay Houston Methodist or reimburse you for the surgery. Houston Methodist also will tell your health plan about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain the health plan's prior approval for this treatment or to determine whether your plan will cover the treatment.

Health Care Operations: We may use or disclose health information about you to support the programs and activities of Houston Methodist such as quality and service improvement; health care delivery review; staff performance evaluation; competence or qualification review of health care professionals; education and training of physicians and other health care providers; and business planning and development, business management and general administrative activities. We use this information to continuously improve the quality of care for all patients we serve. For example, we may combine health information about many patients to evaluate the need for new services or treatments. We may disclose information for educational purposes to doctors, nurses, and other students. And we may combine health information we have with that of other facilities to see where we can make improvements.

Additionally, we may share your health information with other health care providers and payors for certain of their business operations if the information is related to a relationship the provider or payor currently has or previously had with you, and if the provider or payor is required by federal law to protect the privacy of your health information.

Houston Methodist Care Everywhere Health Information Exchange (HIE): We may make your health information available electronically to other care providers such as hospitals, laboratories, and physicians involved in your care who request your health information. The purpose of this information exchange is to support the delivery of safer, better coordinated patient care. Participation in the information exchange is voluntary. If you do not want your Houston Methodist health information to be accessible electronically to health care providers through Houston Methodist Care Everywhere, you may submit a signed opt-out (non-participation) form, available from your registration representative or www.houstonmethodist.org. If you decide not to participate, health care providers will not be able to access your health information electronically through Houston Methodist Care Everywhere.

Electronic Disclosures: Houston Methodist creates, receives, maintains, and in some instances, discloses your protected health information in an electronic format. We will obtain your written authorization prior to electronically disclosing your protected health information for any reason other than treatment, payment, health care operations, or as otherwise authorized or required by law.

Authorization for Other Disclosures: We will not use or disclose your health information, except as described in this document, unless you authorize us, in writing, to do so. You may give us written authorization to disclose your medical information to anyone for any purpose. Houston Methodist may use electronic or other means to satisfy your request for the authorized disclosure. You can revoke an authorization at any time, in writing. If you revoke an authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your health information for the purpose covered by the authorization. However, we are unable to take back any uses or disclosures already made with your authorization. Specific examples of uses or disclosures requiring authorization include: use of psychotherapy notes, marketing activities, the sale of your health information, and most uses and disclosures for which we are compensated.

Hospital Directory: Unless you instruct otherwise, we may disclose your name, general condition, and location in the hospital to your friends, family, and others who ask for you by name. Unless you instruct otherwise, we will provide your name, location in the hospital, and religious affiliation to clergy members of your faith or tradition upon their request.

Family and Friends: We may use or disclose information to notify or assist in notifying a family member, personal representative, or other person responsible for your care, of your location and general condition. We will also disclose health information to a family member, other relative, close personal friend, or any other person you identify, if the information is relevant to that person's involvement with your care or payment for your care.

Fundraising: We may use or disclose health information about you to contact you in an effort to raise money for our organization and its operations. We may disclose this information to The Methodist Hospital Foundation to assist us in our fundraising activities. Only demographic information such as your name, date of birth, address, phone number and other contact information, and information related to the department of your service, your treating physician, outcome information, health insurance status, and the dates you received treatment or services at Houston Methodist would be released. You have the right to opt out of fundraising communications at any time by calling 713-790-3333 and your request must be honored. Any such communication will have clear and conspicuous instructions on how to opt out of future fundraising communications.

Future Communications: We may use or disclose your information to communicate with you via newsletters, mailings or other means regarding treatment options, health related information, disease-management programs, wellness programs, or other community based initiatives or activities in which Houston Methodist participates. If we receive any financial compensation for such communications (with limited permitted exceptions), we will obtain your authorization prior to sending the communication and your authorization can be revoked at any time.

Public Health and Safety: We may use or disclose health information, as authorized or required by local, state or federal law, for the following purposes deemed to be in the public interest or benefit:

- To report certain diseases and wounds, births and deaths, and suspected cases of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence;

- To help identify, locate, or report criminal suspects, crime victims, missing persons, suspicious deaths, or criminal conduct on Houston Methodist's premises;
- To respond to a court order, subpoena, or other judicial process;
- To assist federal disaster relief efforts;
- To enable product recalls, repairs, or replacements;
- To respond to an audit, inspection, or investigation by a health-related government agency;
- To assist in federal intelligence, counterintelligence, and national security issues;
- To facilitate organ and tissue donations;
- To assist coroners, medical examiners, and funeral directors;
- To respond to a request from a jail or prison regarding an inmate's health or medical treatment;
- To respond to a request from your military command authority (if you are a member or veteran of the armed forces);
- To provide information to a workers' compensation program.

Business Associates: There are some services provided at Houston Methodist through contracts with business associates. When these services are contracted, we will disclose your health information to the business associate so they can perform the job we have asked them to do. However, business associates are required by federal law to appropriately safeguard your information.

Research: We will disclose information to researchers after approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) in preparation for a research study, to recruit research subjects, or for a research study. The IRB reviews research proposals and establishes protocols to protect your safety and the privacy of your health information.

Special Privacy Protections for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Information: Alcohol and drug abuse information has special privacy protections. We will not disclose any information identifying an individual as being a patient or provide any health information relating to the patient's substance abuse treatment unless the patient consents in writing; a court order requires disclosure of the information; medical personnel need the information to meet a medical emergency; qualified personnel use the information for the purpose of conducting scientific research, management audits, financial audits, or program evaluation; or it is necessary to report a crime or a threat to commit a crime, or to report abuse or neglect as required by law.

YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION RIGHTS

Your medical record is the property of Houston Methodist (the health care practitioner or facility that compiled it). You have the following rights, with certain exceptions, regarding the health information that is created about you at Houston Methodist.

You have the right to a paper copy of this Notice. In addition, a copy of this Notice also may be obtained at our web site, www.houstonmethodist.org.

Confidential Communications: You have the right to request that we communicate health information to you by an alternate means or location other than your home address and telephone number. Your request must be made in writing to Houston Methodist's contact person, and must specify how or where you wish to be contacted. We will try to accommodate your request for alternate communications. If you request an alternate means of communication, that request also should be communicated by you to all of your physicians, including your private physician.

Restrictions: You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the health information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the health information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, such as a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not use or disclose information to a family member about a surgery you had. To request a restriction, you must make your request in writing to the contact person listed below. We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, our agreement must be in writing, and we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you emergency treatment.

Additionally, you have the right to request that we not use or disclose information to a health plan for purposes of payment or health care operations (not for treatment) if the health information pertains solely to a health care item or service that has been paid for out-of-pocket and in full. Your request for restriction must be submitted in writing to our listed contact person. In this case, Houston Methodist must honor your request. However, you should be aware that such restrictions may have unintended consequences, particularly if other providers need to know that information (such as a pharmacy filling a prescription). It will be your obligation to notify any such other providers of this restriction. Additionally, such a restriction may impact your health plan's decision to pay for related care that you may not want to pay for out of pocket (and which would not be subject to the restriction).

Access: You have the right to review and obtain a copy of your health information, with certain exceptions. Usually, this includes medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes. Your request to review or obtain a copy of your health information must be in writing to our listed contact person. You will be charged fees as authorized by law. To the extent your information is held in an electronic health record, you may be able to receive the information in an electronic format.

Amendment: If you feel that the health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you have the right to ask for an amendment of that information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for us. Your request for an amendment must be made in writing to our listed contact person, and include a reason that supports your request.

Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to receive a list of certain disclosures that we have made within the last six years of your health information. Your request for an accounting must be in writing to our listed contact person, and must state a time period for which you want an accounting. You may request one accounting free of charge within a 12-month period. A fee will be charged for additional lists within this same time period.

Breach Notification: In certain instances, you have the right to be notified in the event that we, or one of our Business Associates, discover an inappropriate use or disclosure of your health information. Notice of any such use or disclosure will be made in accordance with state and federal requirements.

Revisions of this Notice: We reserve the right to change this Notice, and the right to make the new provisions effective for all health information we currently maintain, as well as any information we receive in the future. If we make a major change to this Notice, the revised Notice will be posted at Houston Methodist and on our web site. In addition, a paper copy of the revised Notice will be available upon request.

To Report a Complaint: If you believe your health information privacy rights have been violated, you can file a complaint with us or with the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. There will not be any penalty or retaliation against you for making a complaint to us or to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Contact Person: If you have any questions or need information regarding our legal duties and privacy practices, or how to exercise any of your health information rights listed in this Notice, please contact the Business Practices Officer for the location of interest:

Houston Methodist Hospital -Texas Medical Center

Business Practices Officer
6565 Fannin
Houston, TX 77030
Main Line: 713.790.3311

Houston Methodist The Woodlands Hospital

Business Practices Officer
17201 Interstate 45 South
The Woodlands, TX 77385
Main Line: 281.737.2602

Houston Methodist San Jacinto Hospital

Business Practices Officer
4401 Garth Road
Baytown, TX 77521
Main Line: 281.420.8600

Houston Methodist West Houston Hospital

Business Practices Officer
18500 Katy Frwy.
Houston, TX 77094
Main Line: 832.522.1000

Houston Methodist St. Catherine Hospital

Business Practices Officer
701 S. Fry Road
Katy, TX 77450
Main Line: 281.599.5700

Houston Methodist Willowbrook Hospital

Business Practices Officer
18220 State Hwy. 249
Houston, TX 77070
Main Line: 281.737.1000

Houston Methodist St. John Hospital

Business Practices Officer
18300 St. John Drive
Nassau Bay, TX 77058
Main Line: 281.523.2000

Houston Methodist Primary Care Group

Business Practices Officer
1130 Earle Street
Houston, TX 77035
Main Line: 713.383.5129

Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital

Business Practices Officer
16655 Southwest Frwy.
Sugar Land, TX 77479
Main Line: 281.274.7000

Houston Methodist Specialty Physician Group

Business Practices Officer
1130 Earle Street
Houston, TX 77035
Main Line: 713.383.5129