

Orthopedic Associates of Northern California

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES HEALTH INSURANCE PORTABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1996 (HIPAA)

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.

In the course of doing business, Orthopedic Associates of Northern California (OANC) gathers and retains personal information about our patients. OANC respects the privacy of your personal information and understands the importance of keeping this information confidential and secure. This Notice describes how we protect the confidentiality of your personal information that we receive. OANC has implemented policies and procedures in accordance with Federal and State privacy and confidentiality laws to protect your privacy.

In our office your chart may be handled by any of the office employees or physicians. For each office visit bills are sent out that are coded to reflect the medical conditions of the patient. These codes pass through our billing office and then go out to health insurers or medical groups administering the health plan so that we may receive payment for services. Diagnosis or diagnostic codes are required on requisition slips for imaging studies, laboratory test and almost all other outside evaluations. With some health plans we have to submit a request to authorize certain tests or prescription of medication and these requests contain medical information about patients. When referrals are made to specialists medically relevant information is passed to them to assist in their evaluation of a patient. Cases are often discussed between doctors for the purpose of arriving at a diagnosis or improving an outcome. When the doctor is planning to be off call he may discuss his patients with the doctor taking call. The doctor may discuss social situations with case managers and social workers. In the hospital patients

are often discussed by teams of physicians and nurses. If a patient becomes so ill it may be necessary to discuss their medical condition with relatives or appointed conservators. Medical charts can be reviewed by representatives of health plans to assure quality of care.

This Notice of Privacy Practices describes how we may use and disclose your Protected Health Information (PHI) to carry out treatment, payment and health care operations and for other purposes that are permitted or required by law without specific consent for each time PHI is used. In all instances we strive to provide only the minimum relevant information necessary and disclose only to those who need to know. We may send out appointment reminders for missed appointments. We may call to remind you of your appointment and may leave a message with someone or on your answering machine. OANC sends out cards with a patients name and birth date to hospitals and other medical facilities requesting x-rays be returned. We also give your PHI to collections agencies for the purpose of collecting delinquent accounts.

Signing our consent form will cover release of medical information in circumstances such as those outlined above. This authorization is not a blanket consent.. Your specific consent is required in other circumstances. For instance when life insurance companies request information before writing a policy or in legal settings such as litigation following an injury, patient consent is required for release of information for each request. Similar policy applies to applications for adoption, special vehicle licenses, moves into assisted living centers and medical research.

OANC has always respected individual privacy concerns. Some patients have relatives or friends who work in hospitals and have specifically requested that information be restricted. Individuals may request certain relatives not be informed about certain services. When you sign our consent form, please discuss concerns you might have. State and federal law permits you to request restrictions on the use and disclosure of your PHI.

OANC reserves the right to accept or reject your request. All requests must be in writing.

OANC is also allowed by law to use and disclose your PHI without your consent or authorization for the following purposes:

1. When required by law;
2. For public health activities, such as reports about communicable diseases or work-related issues;
3. In reports about child abuse, domestic violence, or neglect;
4. For health oversight activities, such as reports to governmental agencies that are responsible for licensing physicians or other health care providers;
5. In connection with court proceedings before administrative agencies;
6. For law enforcement purposes, such as responding to a court order or subpoena;
7. In reports to coroners, medical examiners, or funeral directors;
8. For tissue or organ donations;
9. For research, with the approval of certain oversight entities; otherwise, use and disclosure of your personal information required for research requires your authorization;
10. To avert a serious threat to health or safety of a person or of the public.
11. For national security and intelligence activities, including the protection of the President;
12. In connection with services provided under workers compensation laws.

You have the right to inspect and receive copies of your PHI, with limited exceptions. To access your PHI, you must submit a written request detailing what information you want access to and whether you want to inspect it or get a copy of it. We will charge a reasonable fee, as allowed by California law. We may deny your request under limited circumstances and you have the right to appeal our decision.

You have a right to request that we amend your PHI that you believe is incorrect or incomplete. The request must be in writing, and include the reasons you believe the information is inaccurate or incomplete. We are not required to change your health information, and will provide you with information about OANC's denial and how you can disagree with the denial. We may deny your request if we do not have the information, if we did not create the information (unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment), if you would not be permitted to inspect or copy the information at issue, or if the information is accurate and complete as is. You also have the right to request that we add to your record a statement of up to 250 words concerning any statement or item you believe to be incomplete or incorrect. To initiate these requests ask for the medical records dept.

State and federal law provide you the right to request an accounting of all disclosures of your PHI made by OANC that are not directly related to your treatment, payment for your treatment or OANC's health care operations as outlined above.

As required by HIPAA you have a right to request that communications concerning your personal health information be made through confidential channels. We will make reasonable efforts to accommodate all reasonable requests. Some method of contact must be provided, and as appropriate, information as to how payment will be handled.

You are not required to sign our consent for release of medical information form. However without your consent, providing medical care would be extremely difficult given the interconnected nature of medical care (see paragraphs above).

OANC is obligated to comply with the privacy practices set forth in this Notice. If you believe that OANC has violated this privacy policy, you have the right to file a complaint with OANC, your Health Plan, the California Department of Managed Care or the United States Department of Health and Human Service.

If you should have any questions regarding your rights you should direct your inquiries to:



ORTHOPEDIC ASSOCIATES
OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

1600 Esplanade, Suite C • Chico, CA 95926-3369
(530) 897-4500

OANC reserves the right to amend or change the terms of this Notice at any time and to make the provisions of the new notice effective for all personal information we maintain. You may request updates to this Notice.

The effective date of this Notice is February 14, 2003.