

Geneva Woods Ear, Nose, and Throat Associates, Inc.

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Dear Patient:

Physicians have always protected the confidentiality of health information by locking medical records away in file cabinets and refusing to reveal your health information. Today, state and federal laws also attempt to ensure the confidentiality of this sensitive information.

The federal government recently published regulations designed to protect the privacy of your health information. This "privacy rule" protects health information that is maintained by physicians, hospitals, other health care providers and health plans. As of April 14, 2003, your physician will need to comply with the privacy rule's standards for protecting the confidentiality of your health information.

This new regulation protects virtually all patients regardless of where they live or where they receive their health care. Every time you see a physician, are admitted to the hospital, fill a prescription, or send a claim to a health plan, your physician, the hospital and health plan will need to consider the privacy rule. All health information including paper records, oral communications, and electronic formats (such as e-mail) are protected by the privacy rule.

The privacy rule also provides you certain rights, such as the right to have access to your medical records. However, there are exceptions; these rights are not absolute. In addition we will be taking even more precautions in our office to safeguard your health information such as training our employees and employing computer security measures. Please feel free to ask your physician or our privacy contact about exercising your rights or how your health information is protected in our office.

The Notice of Private Practices attached to this letter explains our privacy practices. It contains very important information about how your protected health information is handled by our office. It also describes how you can exercise your rights with regard to your protected health information.

Please let us know if you have any questions about our Notice of Privacy Practices. You may contact our privacy contact at 563-3515 or discuss any questions you may have with your physician.

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