

Fox & Schingo Plastic Surgery

Protecting Your Health Information

What you need to know about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

Identity theft. Credit Card fraud. Concern for the privacy and security of personal information has never been greater. Our concern for the safety and security of your personal healthcare information has never been taken more seriously.

While we have always gone to great lengths to ensure the privacy of your personal health information, the Federal Government has established regulations to help standardize privacy and security across the country and across all different types of healthcare organizations.

These regulations are part of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act or HIPAA, for short. HIPAA does three primary things.

1. It helps to standardize and simplify the way healthcare organizations exchange electronic healthcare.
2. It provides consumers with additional protections for getting and maintaining health insurance coverage; although, it does not guarantee coverage.
3. It creates new security rules to ensure the safety and privacy of individual health information and medical records.

HIPAA ensured the Privacy and Security of Individual Health Information

Individual state laws previously governed use and disclosure of this information, creating many inconsistencies and gaps in a way your health information is protected. HIPAA sets minimum security and privacy standards for healthcare organizations to follow. HIPAA has set penalties for violations of these standards and the misuse of personal health information.

Defining Individual Health Information

Every time you go to see a doctor, are admitted to a hospital, fill a prescription or send a claim to an insurance company, a record is made of your confidential health information. This type of information is referred to as individually identifiable health information and is the type of information regulated by HIPAA. It can be in any format- electronic, paper, or oral.

Healthcare organizations that collect and manage this type of information and are therefore covered by these regulations including physicians, physical therapists, mental health professionals, dentists, chiropractors; and other health care clearinghouses such as claims processors, and other healthcare organizations who conduct administrative and financial transactions.

Added Control Over Health Information

Under HIPAA, you have new rights to understand how your healthcare information is used:

1. Right to education- Healthcare providers and health plans are required to provide you with a clear written explanation of how they intend to use and disclose your information.
2. Right to access Medical Records- You have the right to see and get copies of your medical records, request changes and receive history of non-routine disclosures of your personal health information.
3. Right to Consent- Healthcare providers are required to obtain prior consent before sharing personal health information for purposes other than treatment, payment and healthcare operations.
4. Right to Recourse- You have the right to file a formal complaint if you believe that violation of the regulations were made.

In general, HIPAA tries to find a balance between protecting your privacy and allowing the appropriate flow of information between healthcare providers that is necessary to access care and receive quality healthcare services.