

## **OFFICE POLICIES**

### **Welcome to our office!**

Thank you for choosing to see us. We welcome the opportunity to serve you. Our goal is to provide you with safe, appropriate medical care that is sensitive to your unique needs.

Your health and well being depends on a partnership between you and your physician and others on the healthcare team. Our partnership is of greatest benefit to you when you bring your medical problems to our attention in a timely fashion, provide information about your medical condition to the best of your ability, ask question about your care and treatment and actively participate in your health care management.

We want you to feel comfortable in our office and have provided this information that should help answer some of your questions about our practice. Please feel free to discuss any of the following topics with our staff.

**Office hours and appointments:** The office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. We ask that you make every effort to arrive on time (or a few minutes early) for your appointment. If it is necessary to cancel an appointment, call the office as soon as possible to reschedule. This will allow others to get an earlier appointment.

### **Payment Policies:**

#### **Billing:**

You will receive a bill after your charges have been processed by your insurance carrier(s), or if we have not heard from your insurance carrier after an extended period of time. It is your responsibility to contact your insurance company if you have not received an "Explanation of Benefits" (or EOB). All non-covered charges and remaining charges after your insurance has been paid are due and payable within 30 days of billing. If you do not have insurance and/or special arrangements are necessary for the payment of your bill, please talk with the business office where arrangements can be made quickly and easily.

#### **INSURANCE:**

Our office will file your charges to your insurance companies for you. *Please keep the the business office informed of any changes in your insurance status*" Although we will assist you in processing your claim, **PAYMENT OF THE BILL IS ULTIMATELY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.** We are currently participating providers for most insurance companies that service this area. We take both Medicaid programs and Medicare. If your charges are to be filled with your employer or workman's compensation, auto insurance, etc., please make sure to inform the registration staff at each visit.

**EMERGENCIES:**

Dr. Drake takes calls after office hours at his home. His home phone number is 931-738-8028. All routine calls for medication refill requests should be made to the office during regular business hours. Life threatening emergencies, call 911. If you are concerned enough to consider going to the hospital emergency room, call Dr. Drake first for advice. His home phone has an answering machine, so if he is not home please follow the directions given. Some weekends are covered by other physicians and the answering machine will give directions on how they may be contacted.

**HOSPITALIZATIONS:**

When hospitalization is required Dr. Drake will see you at White County Community Hospital. The fees for services provided by either hospital or the hospital-based physicians (radiologist, the emergency room physician and the pathologist) are all billed separately from the services provided by Dr. Drake. To assist the hospital in filing your insurance claims, be prepared to supply information regarding your carrier at the time of admission. Also, if your insurance carrier requires pre-authorization for admission, inform us of this requirement at the time your hospitalization is scheduled.

**CONSULTATIONS AND PROCEDURES:**

There may be times when we must refer you to a specialist. When you are referred to a specialist in consultation or when you have a medical/surgical procedure scheduled, many insurance companies require pre-authorization. Please let us know each time your insurance company requires pre-authorization

**ANNUAL PHYSICAL/PREVENTATIVE HEALTH:**

As a general rule, an annual physical exam and most screening tests are not covered by insurance. However, some insurance companies specifically pay for an "annual" physical examination and some preventive medicine services (like mammography). In most of these situations, the insurance company will pay 100% of the cost for these preventive services even if you have not yet met your deductible. If you have health insurance that does pay for an "annual" physical examination or other preventive services, make sure our office is aware of this information.

**PRESCRIPTION REFILLS:**

Many medications require ongoing refills; however, it is possible to run out of your medication refills prior to your next appointment. It is important not to miss any doses of certain medications. Please call during our normal business hours for a refill when you have at least 7 days of the medication remaining to avoid waiting unnecessarily at the pharmacy or missing any of your doses. If you have any confusion about whether or not to continue a medication that has no more refills, PLEASE CALL our office and we will give you the proper advice.

**NURSING PHONE CALLS:**

Sometimes it is necessary to call our office and speak with a nurse about a routine medication refill or a minor problem that you are having regarding your health. If you place a call to our nursing staff before 11:00 p.m. they will make every effort to call you back before 5:30 that same day. If you place your call after 11:00 p.m. it may very well be the next morning before your phone call will be returned. Remember they must speak with Dr. Drake or Katina Jones, PAC, before advising you on your problem and calling repeatedly every hour or so just delays their response time. Our nursing staff will make every effort to take care of your phone calls as promptly as possible and if it is an emergency they will handle it immediately.

**TEST RESULTS:**

If you have tests performed at our office we will contact you about the results. We will contact you whether they are normal or need further explanation. If you do not hear from us in the time frame that we tell you that we will call, please contact our office. The hospital will sometimes tell you that we have results immediately, but that is very rarely the case. Most test results will come to our office in 3-7 business days.

## **PATIENT RIGHTS**

You have the right to privacy and confidentiality regarding your office visits and records.

You have the right to adequate education and counseling regarding your medical condition.

You have the right to have all procedures, risks, benefits and alternatives explained and your questions answered in lay language.

You have the right to have medications' effectiveness and possible side effects explained to you.

You have the right to see results of tests and have the meaning of tests explained to you.

You have the right to refuse treatment to the extent permitted by law, and the right to receive information on alternatives and consequences of refused treatment.

You have the right to review your medical records and have them explained.

You have the right to decide whether or not to participate in clinical research studies.

## **PATIENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Patients have the responsibility to give honest, accurate and complete medical history information.

Patients have the responsibility to make sure that they understand what the doctor is saying and if not, ask questions for clarification.

Patients have the responsibility to follow their doctor's medical advice and instructions.

Patients should report any significant changes in their health to their doctor.

Patients should keep appointments or cancel in advance because failure to do so prevents other patients from being seen.

Patients have the responsibility to understand their own insurance benefits, coverage, co-payment responsibilities and obtaining referrals and authorizations.

## **CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS**

We value you and want you to be satisfied with the service, care and treatment that we provide. If you have any concerns or complaints please let us know as soon as possible. You will be given an opportunity to talk to a member of our office staff most familiar with the subject of your concern or complaint. We will strive to immediately address your concern or resolve your complaint. If we are not able to immediately provide you with a response, we will tell you when you can expect to receive a response from us. Please be assured that your future care and treatment will not be compromised by letting us know your concerns or complaints. You may email the office manager at [officemanager@alandrakemd.com](mailto:officemanager@alandrakemd.com) to inform us of any thing that you would like to address.

## **PATIENT SAFETY-YOUR ROLE AS THE PATIENT**

Physicians have long recognized that the health and well being of patients depend on a collaborative effort between the physician and patient. The single most important way you can help get safer care is to be an active member of your health care team. That means taking part in every decision about your health care and working with your physician in a mutually respectful alliance. Research shows that patients who are more involved with their care tend to get better results. Listed below are some steps you can take to help you and your health care team become partners in making your healthcare safer.

### **Give Information. Don't Wait to be Asked!**

1. You know important things about your symptoms and your health history. Tell your doctor what you think he or she needs to know.
2. It is important to tell your doctor personal information—even if it makes you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. Patients have the responsibility to give honest, accurate and complete medical history information.
3. Bring a “health history” list with you, and keep it up to date. You might want to make a copy of the form for each member of your family.
4. Always bring any medicines you are taking, or a list of those medicines (include when and how often you take them) and what strength. Talk about any allergies or reactions you have had to your medicines.
5. Tell your doctor about any herbal products you use or alternative medicines or treatments you receive.
6. Bring other medical information, such as x-ray films, test results, and medical records.

### **Get Information,**

1. Ask questions. If you don't, your doctor may think you understand everything that was said. Patients have the right to adequate education and counseling regarding their medical condition. Patients also have the responsibility to make sure that they understand what the doctor is saying and if not, ask questions for clarification.

2. Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make them get asked and answered.
3. You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions. This person can also help you understand and/or remember the answers.
4. Ask your doctor to draw pictures if that might help to explain something.
5. Let your doctor know if you need more time. If there is not time that day, perhaps you can speak to a nurse or our physician assistant on staff. Or, ask if you can call later to speak with someone. You have the right to have all procedures, risks, benefits and alternatives explained and your questions answered in your language.

### **Once You Leave the Doctor's Office, Follow Up**

1. If you have questions, call.
2. If your symptoms get worse, or if you have problems with your medicine, call. Patients should report any significant changes in their health to their doctor.
3. If you had tests and do not hear from us don't assume that no news is good news. You have the right to see results of tests and have the meaning of tests explained to you.
4. You have the right to refuse treatment to the extent permitted by law, and the right to receive information on alternatives and consequences of refused treatment. You also have the responsibility to follow their doctor's medical advice and instructions if you are in agreement.
5. If your doctor said you should return for a follow-up appointment or see a specialist, make an appointment and keep it. Patients should keep appointments or call and reschedule in advance because failure to do so prevents patients from being seen.

Government agencies, purchasers of group health care, and health care providers are working together to make the U.S. health care system safer for patients and the public. This fact sheet tells what you can do.

### **Medicines**

1. **Make sure that all of your doctors know about everything you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs.** At least once a year, bring all of your medicines and supplements with you to your doctor. This will help you and your doctor talk about them and find out if there are any problems. It will also help your doctor keep your records up to date, which can help you get better quality care.
2. **Make sure your doctor knows about any allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines.** This can help you avoid getting a medicine that can harm you.
3. **When your doctor writes you a prescription, make sure you can read it.** If you can't read your doctor's handwriting, your pharmacist might not be able to either.
4. **Ask for information about your medicines in terms you can understand—both when your medicines are prescribed and when you receive them.** What is the medicine for? How am I supposed to take it, and for how long? What side effects are

- likely and what do I do if they occur? Is this medicine safe to take with other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking? What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
5. **When you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy, ask: Is this the medicine that my doctor prescribed?** A study by the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences found that 88 percent of medicine errors involved the wrong drug or the wrong dose.
  6. **If you have any questions about the directions on your medicine labels, ask.** You have the right to have medications' effectiveness and possible side effects explained to you. Medicine labels can be hard to understand. For example, ask if "four doses daily" means taking a dose every 6 hours around the clock or just during regular waking hours.
  7. **Ask your pharmacist for the best device to measure your liquid medicine. Also, ask questions if you're not sure how to use it.** Research shows that many people do not understand the right way to measure liquid medicines. For example, many use household teaspoons, which often do not hold a true teaspoon of liquid. Special devices like marked syringes, help people to measure the right dose. Being told how to use the devices helps even more.
  8. **Ask for written information about the side effects your medicine could cause.** If you know what might happen, you will be better prepared if it does—or, if something unexpected happens instead. That way, you can report the problem right away and get help before it gets worse. A study found that written information about the medicines can help patients recognize problem side effects and then give that information to either the doctor or the pharmacist.

### **Hospital Stays**

9. **If you are in a hospital, consider asking all health care workers who have direct contact with you whether they have washed their hands.** Handwashing is an important way to prevent the spread of infections in hospitals. Yet, it is not done regularly or thoroughly enough. A recent study found that when patients checked whether health care workers washed their hands, the workers washed their hands more often and used more soap.
10. **When you are being discharged from the hospital, ask your doctor to explain the treatment plan you will use at home.** This includes learning about your medicines and finding out when you can get back to your regular activities. Research shows that at discharge time, doctors think their patients understand more than they really do about what they should or should not do when they return home.

### **Surgery**

11. **If you are having surgery, make sure that you, your doctor, and your surgeon all agree and are clear on exactly what will be done.** Doing surgery at the wrong site (for example, operating on the left knee instead of the right) is rare. But even once is too often. The good news is that wrong-site surgery is 100 percent preventable. The

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons urges its members to sign their initials directly on the site to be operated on before the surgery.

### **Other Steps You Can Take**

12. **Speak up if you questions or concerns.** You have a right to question anyone who is involved with your care.
13. **Make sure that someone, such as your personal doctor, is in charge of your care.** This is especially important if you have many health problems or are in a hospital.
14. **Make sure that all health professionals involved in your care have important health information about you.** Do not assume that everyone knows everything they need to.
15. **Ask a family member or friend to be there with you and to be your advocate (someone who can help get things done and speak up for you if you can't).** Even if you think you don't need help now, you might need it later.
16. **Know that "more" is not always better.** It is a good idea to find out why a test or treatment is needed and how it can help you. You could be better off without it.
17. **Learn about your condition and treatments by asking your doctor and nurse and by using other reliable sources.** Patients who are well informed about their treatment tend to be more satisfied with the outcome or results of their treatment. For almost every disease, there is a national or local association or society that publishes consumer information. Check your local telephone directory. There are also organized groups of patients with certain illnesses that can often provide information about a condition, alternative treatments, and experience with local doctors and hospitals. Ask your hospital or doctors if they know of any patient groups related to your condition.