

Effective Date of this Notice: May 1, 2024

COLE DERMATOLOGY, LLC

NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

As Required by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and the Updated HIPAA Omnibus Rule Published January 25, 2013

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED, AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION. IT ALSO CONTAINS PRIVACY POLICIES PERTAINING TO THE USE OF COLLECTED MOBILE/PHONE NUMBER INFORMATION.

PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.

A. OUR COMMITMENT TO YOUR PRIVACY

Cole Dermatology, LLC is dedicated to maintaining the privacy of your protected health information (PHI). In conducting our business, we will create records regarding you and the treatment and services we provide to you. We are required by law to maintain the confidentiality of health information that identifies you. We also are required by law to provide you with this notice of our legal duties and the privacy practices that we maintain in our practice concerning your PHI. By federal and state law, we must follow the terms of the notice of privacy practices that we have in effect at the time.

We realize that these laws are complicated, but we must provide you with the following important information:

- How we may use and disclose your PHI
- Your privacy rights in your PHI
- Our obligations concerning the use and disclosure of your PHI

The terms of this notice apply to all records containing your PHI that are created or retained by Cole Dermatology, LLC. We reserve the right to revise or amend this Notice of Privacy Practices. Any revision or amendment to this notice will be effective for all of your records that our practice has created or maintained in the past, and for any of your records that we may create or maintain in the future. Our practice will have a copy of our current Notice readily available in our office at all times, and you may request a copy of our most current Notice at any time.

B. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS NOTICE, PLEASE CONTACT:

**Cole Dermatology, LLC
Attn: Privacy Officer
2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA 31602**

C. WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION (PHI) IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

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1. Treatment. We may use and disclose your PHI for your treatment and to provide you with treatment-related health care services. For example, we may disclose information to doctors, nurses, technicians, or other personnel, including people outside our office, who are involved in your medical care and need the information to provide you with medical care.

2. Payment. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI in order to bill and collect payment for the services and items you may receive from us. For example, we may contact your health insurer to certify that you are eligible for benefits (and for what range of benefits), and we may provide your insurer with details regarding your treatment to determine if your insurer will cover, or pay for, your treatment. We also may use and disclose your PHI to obtain payment from third parties that may be responsible for such costs, such as family members. Also, we may use your PHI to bill you directly for services and items. We may disclose your PHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in their billing and collection efforts.

3. Health Care Operations. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to operate our business. As examples of the ways in which we may use and disclose your information for our operations, our practice may use your PHI to evaluate the quality of care you received from us, or to conduct cost-management and business planning activities for our practice. We may disclose your PHI to other health care providers and entities to assist in their health care operations.

4. Appointment Reminders. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to contact you and remind you of an appointment. See Section G for information regarding our use of your mobile information.

5. Treatment Options. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI to inform you of potential treatment options or alternatives.

6. Disclosures Required By Law. Our practice will use and disclose your PHI when we are required to do so by federal, state or local law.

D. USE AND DISCLOSURE OF YOUR PHI IN CERTAIN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The following categories describe unique scenarios in which we may use or disclose your identifiable health information:

1. Public Health Risks. Our practice may disclose your PHI to public health authorities that are authorized by law to collect information for the purpose of:

- reporting child abuse or neglect
- preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability
- notifying a person regarding potential exposure to a communicable disease
- notifying a person regarding a potential risk for spreading or contracting a disease or condition
- reporting reactions to drugs or problems with products or devices
- notifying individuals if a product or device they may be using has been recalled
- notifying appropriate government agency(ies) and authority(ies) regarding the potential abuse or neglect of an adult patient (including domestic violence); however,

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we will only disclose this information if the patient agrees or we are required or authorized by law to disclose this information

- notifying your employer under limited circumstances related primarily to workplace injury or illness or medical surveillance.

2. Health Oversight Activities. Our practice may disclose your PHI to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law. Oversight activities can include, for example, investigations, inspections, audits, surveys, licensure and disciplinary actions; civil, administrative, and criminal procedures or actions; or other activities necessary for the government to monitor government programs, compliance with civil rights laws and the health care system in general.

3. Lawsuits and Similar Proceedings. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI in response to a court or administrative order, if you are involved in a lawsuit or similar proceeding. We also may disclose your PHI in response to a discovery request, subpoena, or other lawful process by another party involved in the dispute, but only if we have made an effort to inform you of the request or to obtain an order protecting the information the party has requested.

4. Law Enforcement. We may release PHI if asked to do so by a law enforcement official:

- Regarding a crime victim in certain situations, if we are unable to obtain the person's agreement
- Concerning a death we believe has resulted from criminal conduct
- Regarding criminal conduct at our offices
- In response to a warrant, summons, court order, subpoena or similar legal process
- To identify/locate a suspect, material witness, fugitive or missing person
- In an emergency, to report a crime (including the location or victim(s) of the crime, or the description, identity or location of the perpetrator)

5. Serious Threats to Health or Safety. Our practice may use and disclose your PHI when necessary to reduce or prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another individual or the public. Under these circumstances, we will only make disclosures to a person or organization able to help prevent the threat.

6. Military. Our practice may disclose your PHI if you are a member of U.S. or foreign military forces (including veterans) and if required by the appropriate authorities.

7. National Security. Our practice may disclose your PHI to federal officials for intelligence and national security activities authorized by law. We also may disclose your PHI to federal officials in order to protect the President, other officials or foreign heads of state, or to conduct investigations.

8. Inmates. Our practice may disclose your PHI to correctional institutions or law enforcement officials if you are an inmate or under the custody of a law enforcement official. Disclosure for these purposes would be necessary: (a) for the institution to provide health care services to you, (b) for the safety and security of the institution, and/or (c) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of other individuals.

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9. Workers' Compensation. Our practice may release your PHI for workers' compensation and similar programs.

10. Business Associates. We may disclose PHI to our business associates that perform functions on our behalf or provide us with services if the information is necessary for such functions or services. For example, we may use another company to perform billing services on our behalf. All of our business associates are obligated to protect the privacy of your information and are not allowed to use or disclose any information other than as specified in our contract.

11. Data Breach Notification Purposes. We may use or disclose your PHI to provide legally required notices of unauthorized access to or disclosure of your health information.

12. Coroners, Medical Examiners, and Funeral Directors. We may release PHI to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also release Health Information to funeral directors as necessary for their duties.

E. USES AND DISCLOSURES THAT REQUIRE US TO GIVE YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO OBJECT AND OPT OUT

1. Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care. Unless you object, we may disclose to a member of your family, a relative, a close friend, or any other person you identify, your PHI that directly relates to that person's involvement in your health care. If you are unable to agree or object to such a disclosure, we may disclose such information as necessary if we determine that it is in your best interest based on our professional judgment.

2. Disaster Relief. We may disclose your PHI to disaster relief organizations that seek it to coordinate your care, or notify family and friends of your location or condition in a disaster. We will provide you with an opportunity to agree or object to such a disclosure whenever we practically can do so.

F. YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING YOUR PHI

You have the following rights regarding the PHI that we maintain about you:

1. Confidential Communications. You have the right to request that our practice communicate with you about your health and related issues in a particular manner or at a certain location. For instance, you may ask that we contact you at home, rather than work. In order to request a type of confidential communication, you must make a written request to **Cole Dermatology, LLC, Attn: Privacy Officer, 2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA, 31602** specifying the requested method of contact, or the location where you wish to be contacted. Our practice will accommodate **reasonable** requests. You do not need to give a reason for your request.

2. Requesting Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the health information we use or disclose for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the PHI we disclose to someone involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not share information about a particular diagnosis or treatment with your spouse. In order to

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request a restriction in our use or disclosure of your PHI, you must make your request in writing to **Cole Dermatology, LLC, Attn: Privacy Officer, 2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA, 31602**. We are not required to agree to your request unless you are asking us to restrict the use and disclosure of your PHI to a health plan for payment or health care operation purposes and such information you wish to restrict pertains solely to a health care item or service for which you have paid us out-of-pocket in full. If we agree, we are bound by our agreement except when otherwise required by law, in emergencies, or when the information is necessary to treat you.

3. Out-of-Pocket Payments. If you paid out-of-pocket (or in other words, you have requested that we not bill your health plan) in full for a specific item or service, you have the right to ask that your PHI with respect to that item or service not be disclosed to a health plan for purposes of payment or health care operations, and we will honor that request.

4. Inspection and Copies. You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the PHI that may be used to make decisions about you, including patient medical records and billing records. You must submit your request in writing to **Cole Dermatology, LLC, Attn: Privacy Officer, 2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA, 31602** in order to inspect and/or obtain a copy of your PHI. We have up to 30 days to make your PHI available to you and we may charge you a reasonable fee for the costs of copying, mailing, or other supplies associated with your request. We may not charge you a fee if you need the information for a claim for benefits under the Social Security Act or any other state or federal needs-based benefit program. Our practice may deny your request to inspect and/or copy in certain limited circumstances; however, you may request a review of our denial. Another licensed health care professional chosen by us will conduct reviews.

5. Amendment. You may ask us to amend your health information if you believe it is incorrect or incomplete, and you may request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for our practice. To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to **Cole Dermatology, LLC, Attn: Privacy Officer, 2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA, 31602**. You must provide us with a reason that supports your request for amendment. Our practice will deny your request if you fail to submit your request (and the reason supporting your request) in writing. Also, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that is in our opinion: (a) accurate and complete; (b) not part of the PHI kept by or for the practice; (c) not part of the PHI which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or (d) not created by our practice, unless the individual or entity that created the information is not available to amend the information.

6. Accounting of Disclosures. All of our patients have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” An “accounting of disclosures” is a list of certain non-routine disclosures our practice has made of your PHI for non-treatment, non-payment or non-operations purposes. Use of your PHI as part of the routine patient care in our practice is not required to be documented. For example, the doctor sharing information with the nurse; or the billing department using your information to file your insurance claim. In order to obtain an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to **Cole Dermatology, LLC, Attn: Privacy Officer, 2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA, 31602**. All requests for an “accounting of disclosures” must state a time period, which may not be longer than six (6) years from the date of disclosure and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. The first list you request within a 12-month period is free of charge, but our practice may charge you for additional lists within the same 12-month

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period. Our practice will notify you of the costs involved with additional requests, and you may withdraw your request before you incur any costs.

7. Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice. You are entitled to receive a paper copy of our notice of privacy practices. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice, speak with a practice representative, or contact **Cole Dermatology, LLC, Attn: Privacy Officer, 2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA, 31602.** You may also obtain a copy of this notice at our website: www.colederm.com.

8. Right to File a Complaint. If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with our practice or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with our practice, contact **Cole Dermatology, LLC, Attn: Privacy Officer, 2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA, 31602.** All complaints must be submitted in writing. **You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.**

9. Right to Provide an Authorization for Other Uses and Disclosures. The following uses and disclosures of your PHI will be made only with your written authorization: 1) Uses and disclosures of PHI for marketing purposes; and 2) Disclosures that constitute a sale of your PHI.

G. POLICY REGARDING COLLECTED MOBILE INFORMATION

No mobile information will be shared with third parties/affiliates for marketing/promotional purposes. All the above categories exclude text messaging originator opt-in data and consent; this information will not be shared with any third parties.

Use of Information

Your information is used to provide medical services, process payments, communicate with you, and improve our services. We may use 10DLC compliant messaging services for secure text-based communication.

Data Security

We implement various security measures to ensure the protection of your personal information against unauthorized access, alteration, disclosure, or destruction.

Consent for 10DLC Messaging

By providing your mobile phone number, you consent to receive text messages from us for appointment reminders, treatment follow-up, and other healthcare-related communications. Standard message and data rates may apply.

Message Content and Frequency

Our text messages are intended to provide valuable information related to our services or products. We commit to sending messages at a reasonable frequency and ensuring the content is relevant and appropriate.

Opt-Out Policy

You have the right to opt-out of 10DLC messaging services at any time. To opt-out, you can reply with a specific keyword like 'STOP' or contact our office directly.

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Prohibited Content

We strictly adhere to regulations prohibiting certain types of content. This includes, but is not limited to, content related to SHAFT (Sex, Hate, Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco), as well as any fraudulent, malicious, abusive, or illegal content.

Data Protection and Privacy

We prioritize the security and confidentiality of your personal information. Our systems and processes are designed to protect your data and comply with relevant data protection laws.

Our practice will obtain your written authorization for uses and disclosures that are not identified by this notice or permitted by applicable law. Any authorization you provide to us regarding the use and disclosure of your PHI may be revoked at any time in writing. After you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose your PHI for the reasons described in the authorization. But disclosure that we made in reliance on your authorization before you revoked it will not be affected by the revocation. Please note that we are required to retain records of your care.

Again, if you have any questions regarding this notice or our health information privacy policies, please contact:

**Cole Dermatology, LLC
Attn: Privacy Officer
2410 North Oak Street, Valdosta, GA 31602**