

Plymouth Pediatrics Adolescent Privacy Policy

This policy on adolescent privacy is a supplement to the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Privacy Group “Notice of Privacy Practices” that describes in detail about how medical information about you or your child may be used and disclosed. This can be found at www.dhmc.org under Patient Rights.

We believe that adolescents are part of families and that parents need to be actively involved in the medical care of their adolescents. We also recognize the developing maturity of teenagers, adolescents’ need for privacy, and the competing demands for time that parents and young people face.

Therefore:

We request that parents or guardians accompany their children and adolescents under the age of 18 for office visits where health care decisions will need to be made. The office visit is usually the best opportunity to speak with the doctor or nurse about your adolescent’s health.

Adolescents of sufficient maturity may come for routine medical care including immunizations or allergy shots unaccompanied if either written or verbal consent for treatment is given prior to or at the scheduled visit. If you plan to send the adolescent alone, you need to notify the receptionist scheduling the visit or send a note along. The receptionist or other staff is able to accept verbal consent to treat your adolescent over the telephone, and will document this in your child’s medical chart.

Minors requesting a confidential visit without their parents’ or guardians’ knowledge will be given such an appointment *without* requiring parental notification. However, unless the parent or guardian requests the services, the adolescent, and not the parents or guardian, will be responsible for the costs of the services provided. We do not want financial barriers to prevent adolescents from receiving needed care, hence if payment is going to be a problem, you or your adolescent should discuss this with our staff prior to the visit so appropriate arrangements can be made.

During preventive visits, and most other medical visits for adolescents, parents or guardians will be excused from the examination room for a portion of the visit to allow the adolescent to talk directly with the doctor or nurse-practitioner. These discussions are private, however if the clinician perceives there to be a serious problem, parents or guardians will be involved. We strongly encourage communication between parents and adolescents.

Our clinicians often ask about very private issues including behavior choices such as substance use and sex. These issues will be routinely discussed in preventive visits, but often are discussed in illness visits as well. For example, history of smoking is relevant when evaluating a teen with a cough, and sexual history is critical when evaluating a female teen with abdominal pain. Answers to these questions are documented in the adolescent’s medical record. To encourage open communication and to respect adolescents’ privacy, our policy is to only release health records with the adolescent’s permission. Please honor the privacy of your adolescent’s medical record in a similar fashion as you would their personal diary.

Every rule has an exception. Our clinicians will make exceptions when they perceive it to be in the best interest of the patient and it is in compliance with state and federal law.

*Sincerely,
Plymouth Pediatrics*