

TURNING 18

Turning 18

A guide for parents
and patients

Summerwood
Pediatrics

TURNING 18: A guide for parents and patients

A lot changes when your child turns 18. This guide is intended to help you and your child navigate these changes as they relate to this office. It is important to start having these conversations with your soon-to-be adult child now so that your whole family can be prepared for the changes to come.

INDEX

Information for Parents	2
Information for Patients	4
Scripts	6
Guardianship	8
Forms	9

Information for Parents

Some parents are caught off guard when their child turns 18 and suddenly, they are no longer able to do some things for their child that they have been able to do their whole lives. Parents lose access to health information and feel “left in the dark.” This guide is intended to prepare you for what changes with health information disclosure and scheduling expectations once your child turns 18.

We understand that as parents, you want what is best for your children no matter how old they are. Sometimes, what is best for them is letting them have more control over their healthcare decisions once they become adults.

HIPAA

Though it may not feel like it sometimes, your child is officially considered an adult once they turn 18. This means that a different set of regulations apply to their right to privacy, especially in healthcare. We respect the law and the *intention* of the law, whether expressly written and published or implied. This means that just because something may not be written in the law, we will do our best to interpret the law as it best applies to the privacy of our patients. For example – HIPAA law does not expressly prohibit parents from scheduling appointments, but the intention of the law is to give patients full autonomy over themselves, their information, and their privacy – including having control over when they have appointments. There are some exceptions, like if a patient becomes incapacitated or is not mentally capable of making medical decisions for themselves. In these cases, there may be other legal forms that must be in place for us to allow you to continue to have guardianship over children that are considered legal adults.

Here's another “catch” for parents of children over 18 – even if you are paying their health insurance premium, you still cannot have access to their medical records, up to the age of 26.

HIPAA (cont'd)

If you find yourselves in an emergency situation and you need to have access to your child's health information, you may want to consider having a Medical Power of Attorney Form or a Healthcare Proxy Form filled out. These forms will only go into effect if your child becomes incapacitated or otherwise mentally unable to make medical decisions on their own behalf.

OFFICE POLICIES

Understanding the limited ability parents have to work on the behalf of their adult children is important once your child turns 18, especially if your child is away at college or might have moved to a different state. We understand that college is a demanding time, but as adults, they are now responsible for their own healthcare decisions. We also understand, however, that scheduling a doctor's appointment on your own for the first time can be scary. We have included some sample scripts for your adult children to use on page 6 of this guide to help with this. Our staff is also aware of these scripts and are trained to try to put your child at ease when calling. We want this to be a positive experience, and we are here to help.

Once your child turns 18, their portal log-in will "reset", and you will lose access. It is highly encouraged for them to activate their own portal account so they can access their health information instantly and so they can request appointments for well visits and follow-ups without having to place a call to our office. Please be aware that urgent visits and sick visits should not be scheduled through the portal due to the urgency of these appointment types and the "lag" in having the request sent to our scheduling department.

After turning 18, your adult child will become responsible for paying copays, balances due, no-show fees, etc. A new set of consents will need to be signed, but any balances prior to turning 18 will remain your responsibility.

Information for Patients

It can be strange to think that one day you will wake up and you turn a “magic” age where you are officially considered an adult. Some things you may have been doing have made you feel like an adult already like driving or working, and some things may make you feel like you are FAR from being an “actual” adult. Either way, once you turn 18, the law looks at you and considers you a legal adult.

Navigating through life at this time can be difficult, and we are hoping this booklet will at least help make coming to the doctor’s office a little less difficult.

INSURANCE AND BILLING

Insurance can be confusing, even for people who have years of experience dealing with it. If you are still on your parent’s insurance, talk to them about if there are copays or if there are services that are not covered. Once you turn 18, you will be responsible for any copays, balances, no-show fees, etc.

SCHEDULING

You will need to schedule your own office visits going forward. If you are on medication, managing refills and follow-up appointments are going to become part of your healthcare routine. Don’t worry though, most parents are still willing to help out and stay in the background while you place your first few calls to us. If they can’t because they are at work or you are away at college (or if you just want to practice yourself!), we have put together some sample “scripts” you can use when speaking to our receptionists. You don’t have to follow them word-for-word, but for some people it can be helpful to just read what’s on the paper. We just want you to feel relaxed and confident. If you have other questions about your health, rest assured that our staff is trained to be able to help you.

When attending your appointment, bring a list of all medications you take and any potential allergies you might have. You will also need your insurance card.

CANCELLATIONS AND NO-SHOWS

If you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment, call us as soon as possible. This will allow us to book in children that are sick or urgently need to be seen. Waiting until the last minute to cancel limits our ability to have appointment slots open for other patients. If you cancel an appointment on the day that you are supposed to be here, there may be a fee. Additionally, if you “no-show” for an appointment (schedule an appointment then do not come to it without any warning) there will be a fee and may result in being “discharged”, or removed, from the practice. If you are removed from the practice for any reason, including reaching the age of 22 or if you are no longer attending college, you will need to find an adult medicine primary care provider.

If you need to find an adult medicine provider, contact your insurance for practices that are accepting new patients. If you are in this situation, DO NOT WAIT! Some primary care providers have waiting lists for months, and if you are no longer a patient here, you may have limited options (urgent care, emergency department, etc.) which can be very costly.

CONSENTS AND PORTAL

When you come to the office for the first time after you turn 18, you will need to sign all your consents. Your parents have done this for you up to this point, and now it is your turn to verify your contact information, give consent for treatment, consent for us to bill your insurance, etc.

At 18, ownership of your portal and all the contents in it transfer to you. You will need to get a new activation code, which you can either pick up at our office or one can be mailed to you. You can access your health information, make updates to your address and phone number, request appointments for non-urgent matters, send messages to our staff, among other things.

Scripts

Calling the doctor's office for the first time can be scary, even if it is just for a routine physical. Here are a few scripts you can use to make the process a little easier.

ANNUAL PHYSICAL

Once a year we like to have a wellness exam to make sure you are staying healthy and that there are no underlying conditions. This is also referred to as a "physical". Sometimes your parents will have already scheduled this, but sometimes they have not because our schedule was not open that far in advance before you turned 18. Check with your parents to see if your 18-year-old physical has been scheduled or call our office.

1) Checking to see if you have an appointment: "Hi, this is (YOUR NAME) and my date of birth is (DATE OF BIRTH). I want to see if my 18-year physical is scheduled. Can you tell me what upcoming appointments I have?"

*If there is a physical scheduled and you **can** make it: "Thank you for looking that up, I will be there. Can you please update my phone number to (YOUR PHONE NUMBER) so I get the reminder?"

*If there is a physical scheduled and you **CAN NOT** make it: "Thank you for looking that up, but I actually can't make that day. Do you have anything available on (DATE YOU ARE AVAILABLE NEAR SCHEDULED DATE)?" Continue until you find a good date and time that works for you.

*If there is **not** a physical scheduled: "Thank you for looking. I would like to schedule my physical, can you tell me who I usually see, and when their next available appointment is?" If that date and time works for you, let the receptionist know you will take that appointment. If it does not, offer a date and time that is around the date they suggested that works for you. Continue until you find an appointment that you will be able to attend.

ANNUAL PHYSICAL (cont'd)

2) Scheduling a physical if you know one **does not** exist yet: “Hi, this is (YOUR NAME) and my date of birth is (DATE OF BIRTH). I want to schedule my annual physical appointment. What date and time do you have available?” If that date and time works for you, let the receptionist know you will take that appointment. If it does not, offer a date and time that is around the date they suggested that works for you. Continue until you find an appointment that you will be able to attend.

MEDICATION/ASTHMA/ADHD/DEPRESSION

Appointments for medication, especially controlled substances, must be made and refills must be requested in a timely manner. If you do not schedule or attend medication management appointments, you run the risk of not being able to get refills on time. Controlled substances must go through a complex approval process, which typically takes a couple of days to complete.

“Hi, this is (YOUR NAME) and my date of birth is (DATE OF BIRTH). I need to schedule a follow-up for (REASON, LIKE ADHD/ASTHMA/ANXIETY, ETC.). What date and time do you have available?” If that date and time works for you, let the receptionist know you will take that appointment. If it does not, offer a date and time that is around the date they suggested that works for you. Continue until you find an appointment that you will be able to attend.

Guardianship

Sometimes it may be necessary to apply for guardianship of your adult child. These cases are typically rare and are for patients that have a disability or a severe mental or developmental reason that permanently prohibits them from making medical decisions on their own behalf.

In these cases, it may be best to seek legal counsel to see how you can best protect your child's healthcare rights as well as help them legally with their finances, housing, transportation, etc.

In New York State, you may reach out to access guardianship forms here:

www.nycourts.gov/forms/surrogates/guardianship.shtml

There are DIY forms, but some people may feel more comfortable with having a lawyer guide them through the process.

Whichever process you choose, be sure to notify our office if there is legal paperwork in place that allows you to continue to make medical decisions on behalf of your adult child.

Forms

Please visit our website forms you may need, like the designation form, records release form, etc.

For the New York State Health Care Proxy Form, please visit:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1430.pdf>

For the New York State Authorization for Release of Health Information, please visit: <https://www.health.ny.gov/forms/doh-5032.pdf>

A few Notes

We hope this information has been helpful. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us during normal office hours.

Summerwood Pediatrics
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Liverpool, NY 13088

Phone: 315-457-9966
Fax: 315-457-9854

Office Hours:
Monday: 9:00 am – 8:00 pm
Tuesday – Friday: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Saturday: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Phone Hours:
Monday – Friday: 8:15 am – 4:15 pm
Saturday: 8:30 am – 11:30 am

Holiday Hours/Closings:
New Years Eve: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
New Years Day: CLOSED
Memorial Day: CLOSED
4th of July: CLOSED
Labor Day: CLOSED
Thanksgiving Day: CLOSED
Christmas Eve: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Christmas Day: CLOSED

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