

Beacon Healthcare Associates Communications

It is our aim to provide good customer service to our patients. With this in mind, we want to make sure all of our patients understand the systems we have developed to try to ensure safety, efficiency and quality.

Office hours – Our patient care hours are 8:30 am – 5 pm, Monday through Thursday and 8:30 am – 12 pm on Friday. We do schedule specialty care appointments on Friday afternoons, including our respiratory clinic and group medical visits. A few urgent patient appointments are available on Friday afternoon as well. Our telephone hours are 9:00 am – 12 pm Monday through Friday and 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm Monday through Wednesday. From 8:30 – 9:00 am every morning and on Thursday and Friday afternoons we provide options on our telephone system for patients needing to speak to a provider on call or speak to someone about an appointment. All other callers will be asked to leave a message on voice mail. Please know that these messages are checked periodically. We try to respond to them based on priority but certainly within 1 business day.

Telephone calls – Our providers prefer to address patient questions and health concerns face-to-face. This allows for safe and effective health care. If you call with a health related question or concern, our staff is going to offer you an appointment. In cases where this is not possible, our staff will ask for as much detailed information as possible to help the providers in addressing your concern more efficiently and effectively. Your call may be forwarded to our clinical support staff who can effectively triage your needs. In cases of medical emergency, we are likely to direct you to the emergency room for care. In cases of **acute illnesses** we will offer you a same or next day appointment. In cases where an appointment is not possible, **we try to respond within 1-2 hours. In all other cases, we try to respond within 1 business day.** If you do not hear back from us within these parameters, please do call.

Appointments – We generally schedule a return appointment for patients as they check out of the office. We keep a recall list for patients who are not prepared to do so at this time. When needing to reschedule or cancel, **we ask for 24 hour notice** to help us accommodate other patients who may need to be seen. We charge a \$5 fee for cancellation with less than 24 hour notice and a \$15 fee for failure to keep an appointment.

Lab and Diagnostic Test Results – We send out results of lab work and diagnostic testing by mail, including a letter signed by the providers and a copy of the test(s). The process of receiving results in our office, sending them to providers for review and getting copies in the mail generally takes 7-10 days. This process applies to the ultrasound studies done in our office as well. **We tell patients to expect their results in the mail within two weeks of having had the lab work or diagnostic test done.** If you do not receive something from us by then, please do call. Please know that we do call patients when there is a significantly abnormal result that requires more immediate follow-up. On occasion patients are concerned about a clinical situation and may want to call for their results earlier than two weeks. In these cases, the person answering the telephone will ask for detailed information about the test done (e.g., type of test, date and location performed) and refer the request to Linda who will follow-up with the patient within 1 business day.

Prescription Refills – We use an electronic prescribing program for all prescriptions. In order to ensure safety and efficiency we ask our patients to contact their pharmacy to request

prescription refills. We receive requests from the pharmacy electronically and by fax. We ask patients to anticipate their need for refills and **allow 3 business days for us to process their request**. Patients who have not been seen in our office within 6 months are likely to be asked to schedule a follow-up appointment for ongoing refills, particularly for chronic medical conditions. If a patient is calling to request a medication that one of our providers has never filled, the provider may ask to schedule an office visit to review the medication use directly with the patient. We are happy to provide patients with hard copy prescriptions for **mail order pharmacies**. We ask that our patients mail them in on their own behalf. In this case, **we ask that patients anticipate their need well in advance of the time they are scheduled to run out of medication**. We do not refill pain medication without an office visit.

After Hours Call – Dr. Clements and Ms. Davis share after hours call. They provide 24 hour, seven day coverage. The direct number for our answering service is 828-259-5052.

Referrals – We use the services of a variety of health care providers in the area to help enhance the care we offer. We find that each health care provider has a different process by which they receive and process referral requests. In most cases, we fax our request directly to the provider and they contact our patients to schedule the appointment. We generally send over pertinent records at this time. In some cases, we must call other provider offices to schedule appointments. Some specialists request to review patient medical information before deciding whether they will take a patient under their care. In some cases, we need to seek prior authorization from health care plans before we can schedule an appointment. This process can take several hours for each request. **Given this variety, we ask patients to expect to hear either from the other provider office or our office within 10 business days about referral appointments**. If you have not heard from someone about a referral appointment within this time, please do call our office. Please know that many specialists have delays up to several months for new patient appointments. In rare cases we can request that a patient be seen sooner, but only in cases of clear medical need. We do expedite referrals in situations determined to be urgent by the provider ordering the referral.

Prior Authorizations for Prescriptions – Many health and pharmacy plans are requiring prior authorization to fill certain classes of medications and medications not on their formulary. We ask that patients be aware of their formulary and, when possible, bring a copy of it with them to appointments. Often providers will seek to prescribe medications that are covered by patient plans. When a patient's health need requires a medication not covered by their pharmacy plan, our office will be asked to process a request for prior authorization. We process such requests using fax forms available from the health and pharmacy plans. This process can take up to 10-14 days to complete. We are happy to provide patients with samples of the medication(s), if available, to help cover this time period.

Forms – Generally providers will ask patients to schedule appointments in order to complete medical forms. We find that this is the most effective and efficient way to ensure that the form is completed in the manner expected by the patient. If you call to have a form completed, our staff is going to offer you an appointment.

Family Coordination of Care – We are happy to include family members and other people involved in the health care of our patients in visits. In all cases, we must be sure to have patient consent and/or health care power of attorney status confirmed. Often, the most effective way to accomplish coordination of care is by scheduling an appointment with the provider. Such appointments may be covered by the patients insurance. If not, we would bill the visit by time based on our general insurance fee schedule.

**Patient Acknowledgement Form
Beacon Healthcare Associates
Communication Procedures**

I, _____ (Patient Name), have reviewed the previous information about Beacon Healthcare Associates communication procedures. I understand that questions and clarification of these procedures are welcome by the staff.

_____ (Signature) _____ (Date)