WHARTON EYECARE | NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Effective Date: November 10, 2026

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION. PLEASE REVIEW IT CAREFULLY.

Wharton Eyecare LLC, doing business as Wharton Eyecare ("we" or "our"), protects your health information. This notice explains how we may use and disclose protected health information (PHI), your rights, and our duties under HIPAA and applicable federal and New Jersey law. It covers our independent optometry practice; Costco Optical has its own privacy notice. Contact our Privacy Officer in Section 7 to exercise rights or ask questions. We may ask for requests in writing.

1. Your rights

Access your records. You may inspect or request paper or electronic copies of medical, billing and other records used to make decisions about you, in the form and format required by law. We will respond within the applicable legal deadline. Any fee will be reasonable, cost-based and permitted by HIPAA, and will also comply with more protective New Jersey requirements. If access is denied, we will explain why and any available review rights.

Request corrections. Ask us to amend information you believe is inaccurate or incomplete. If we deny your request, we will explain in writing and tell you how to submit a statement of disagreement.

Request confidential communications. Ask us to contact you in a particular way or at a different location. We will accommodate reasonable requests as required by law.

Request restrictions. Ask us to limit uses or disclosures for treatment, payment or healthcare operations. We generally need not agree. If you pay for an item or service in full out of pocket and ask us not to disclose related information to your health insurer for payment or healthcare operations, we will honor that request unless disclosure is required by law.

Request an accounting. Ask for a list of certain disclosures made during the prior six years. Treatment, payment, healthcare operations and some other disclosures are excluded. The first accounting in a 12-month period is free; we may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for additional requests after notifying you.

Receive this notice. You may obtain a paper copy at any time, even if you agreed to electronic delivery.

Choose a representative. A person with verified legal authority, such as a guardian or healthcare agent, may exercise your rights as permitted by law.

Breach notification and complaints. You have the right to notice of a breach of unsecured PHI as required by law, and to complain to us or HHS without retaliation. See Section 7.

2. Routine uses and disclosures

We may use or share PHI for the following purposes when permitted by applicable law. We obtain a release or authorization when required, including under more protective New Jersey law.

Treatment. To provide or coordinate eye care. For example, we may share relevant examination findings with another treating professional, subject to any required release.

Payment. To bill and collect payment. For example, we may send diagnoses, procedure information or supporting records to a vision or medical insurer to process a claim, as legally permitted.

Healthcare operations. To manage the practice, improve quality, train staff and administer services. For example, we may review records to evaluate the quality of care.

Reminders and service providers. We may contact you about appointments, results or follow-up care, respecting applicable law and communication preferences. We may share PHI with EHR vendors, billing services and other business associates. Where required, written agreements require them to safeguard PHI and limit its use.

3. Other permitted or required disclosures

Subject to applicable legal conditions and stricter protections in Section 5, we may use or disclose PHI for:

Public health and safety. Disease reporting; product recalls; adverse reactions; reporting suspected abuse, neglect or domestic violence; or preventing or reducing a serious and imminent threat.

Legal, oversight and government purposes. Disclosures required by law, including HHS compliance reviews; authorized audits, inspections or investigations; qualifying court orders, subpoenas or other legal processes; permitted law enforcement, workers' compensation, military, national security or other specialized government functions.

Research and deceased individuals. Qualifying research that meets legal requirements; organ or tissue donation; or disclosures to coroners, medical examiners and funeral directors as permitted by law.

People involved in your care. With your agreement, an opportunity to object or another legally permitted basis, we may share relevant information with family, friends or others involved in your care or payment, or for disaster relief. If you cannot express your wishes, we may act in your best interest as allowed by law.

We apply the minimum-necessary standard where it is legally required. Information lawfully disclosed to a recipient may be redisclosed and may no longer be protected by HIPAA, although other confidentiality laws may still apply.

4. Written authorization and your choices

Uses and disclosures not described in this notice will be made only with your written authorization, except as otherwise required by law. Most uses or disclosures of psychotherapy notes, marketing requiring authorization, and sales of PHI require your written authorization. You may revoke an authorization in writing, except to the extent we have already relied on it.

If we contact you for fundraising, you may opt out of future fundraising contacts. Before using any Part 2 records for fundraising, we will provide a clear opportunity to decline those communications.

5. Special protections and New Jersey law

We follow stronger applicable federal or New Jersey protections for optometric, certain minor-consent, mental health, HIV/AIDS or genetic records. We obtain any separate consent these laws require and do not make disclosures they prohibit. For optometric-record releases, we obtain a signed patient release where New Jersey law requires it, unless another applicable legal requirement or exception governs.

If we receive or maintain substance use disorder records protected by 42 CFR Part 2, those records, or testimony about their contents, cannot be used or disclosed in civil, criminal, administrative or legislative investigations or proceedings against you without your written consent or a qualifying court order issued after required notice and an opportunity to be heard. A court order must also be accompanied by a subpoena or another legal requirement compelling disclosure. Other Part 2 protections also apply.

6. Our responsibilities and changes

We must safeguard PHI, give you this notice, follow the notice in effect and notify affected individuals of breaches as required by law. We retain records as required by New Jersey law. We may revise this notice as permitted by law and apply the revised terms to all PHI we maintain, including existing records. The current notice will be available on request, in our office and on our website.

7. Questions, requests and complaints

Privacy Officer: Dr. Praksha Butala
Wharton Eyecare LLC, d/b/a Wharton Eyecare
315 State Route 15 North, Wharton, NJ 07885
Phone: 973-659-2048
Email: whartoneye@gmail.com

Contact the Privacy Officer to ask questions, exercise rights or file a complaint. You may also complain to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights: hhs.gov/hipaa/filing-a-complaint/index.html. **We will not penalize or retaliate against you for filing a complaint.**

8. Acknowledgment of receipt

We seek written acknowledgment of receipt except as provided by law. Acknowledgment is not authorization. If unobtainable, we document our good-faith efforts and the reason, as required.