

May 5, 2011

To the parents of our patients:

As we approach the third anniversary of the opening of Purcellville Pediatrics, I want to thank you for entrusting the care of your child(ren) to us. I also want to thank you for referring your friends and neighbors. With your help, the practice has grown from a handful of patients to more than one thousand active patients. As children who grow rapidly can experience “growing pains”, so too can medical practices, and that is the situation with which the practice is now faced. As the volume of the practice continues to grow, and as finding good nursing staff continues to be problematic, the demands on my time and attention have increased to the point that I cannot answer every phone call or complete every referral or school form immediately. In order to continue to focus on the patients in the office with scheduled appointments and provide them with the best medical care, it has become necessary to revise our office policies as follows.

Appointments

There are no walk-in appointments. All appointments must be scheduled in advance.

With the exception of newborns, **no appointments are scheduled in advance for Saturday. Saturday appointments are for new, urgent medical illnesses.** If your child is ill and needs to be seen Saturday morning, please call the office as close to 8 am as possible so arrangements can be made to accommodate you.

We schedule only a limited number of well visits per day to allow room in the schedule for same day sick appointments. Well visits are scheduled for thirty minutes as they often require a significant nursing component (such as immunizations, hearing tests, etc). To help keep us on schedule, **please be on time for your appointment.** If you are more than 15 minutes late for a well visit, you will be asked to reschedule. **If you fail to provide at least 24 hours notice when canceling a well visit, you will be charged a \$75 no show fee.**

With school starting a week earlier this year, we are anticipating an even greater demand for well visits in July and August. Please think carefully about when you are available for a well visit prior to scheduling as it may not be possible to change the appointment once it is scheduled. The schedule through September is now open and we encourage you to book your well visit as soon as possible.

After hours phone calls

As the practice has grown, the number of inappropriate after hours phone calls has increased. As a reminder, after hours is defined as before 8 am Monday through Saturday, after 5 pm Monday through Friday, after 12 noon on Saturday, and anytime on Sunday or scheduled holidays (ie. Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc). **The after hours line is meant for urgent medical questions ONLY.** Examples of appropriate after hours calls include high fever in a young child, difficulty breathing, and severe abdominal pain. Examples of inappropriate after hours calls include OTC medication dosing questions, requests for school forms, referrals, or prescription refills, appointment scheduling, follow up questions to a recent office visit, and general questions about feeding, sleeping, behavior, or development. Due to the volume of after hours phone calls, the practice will be contracting with a pediatric nurse triage service to help answer these calls. As a result, **you will be charged \$15 per call for each after hours phone call.** If you want to avoid the after hours charge, there are other sources of medical advice available to you, such as the nurse’s line through your medical insurance and websites such as www.healthykids.org or the practice website.

Prescriptions

In most circumstances, medication will not be prescribed to your child if he has not been seen in the office for that illness. If your child is taking a prescribed medication regularly, it will only be refilled if your child has had a well visit in the last year and your child has been seen for follow up of that medical illness at the recommended intervals.

Referrals and school forms

We require a minimum of three business days to complete a referral. Please call the office as soon as you schedule your sub specialist appointment to give us adequate time to do this paperwork. As a reminder, referrals are a requirement of the insurance companies for which we are not compensated; therefore, they will not be given priority over patient care.

Please allow a minimum of five business days to complete school and camp forms. These forms cannot be completed if your child has not had a well visit in the last year. For high school sports, a well visit must be completed after May 1st for all fall and winter sports.

Medical records

Requests for the transfer of medical records must be made in writing. All outstanding medical claims and bills must be paid in full prior to the release of records. **There is a record copying fee of 10 cents per page.**

Payments

As more patients have chosen high deductible or health savings account plans, it has become increasingly difficult to receive timely payment for services rendered. Therefore, effective January 1st, the practice began charging interest at a rate of 1.5% per month on all balances that are outstanding for more than 30 days. In addition, the practice will be phasing in a plan to have patients with a high deductible pay for their services before leaving the office. If, at any time, you are unable to pay your bill, we are willing to work with you to develop a payment plan. You must call and speak with our billing department prior to your balance being more than 30 days outstanding, otherwise your account will accrue interest.

One final note: Dr. Irvine will be going on vacation and therefore **the office will be closed June 23rd - June 28th**. There will be a limited number of appointments for sick visits only on June 22nd and June 29th. There will be voice mail available to leave non urgent messages for the staff to return within 24 hours. All urgent medical questions will be covered by the pediatric nurse triage line as described above. Newborns will be seen in the hospital by the neonatology staff and seen for follow up, if needed, by a covering community pediatrician. **There will be NO referrals, school forms, prescription refills, or medical records available during the time the office is closed**, so please plan ahead.

Thank you for your understanding and support of these policy changes as we continue to strive to provide all our patients the best individualized care and attention.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Irvine and the staff of Purcellville Pediatrics