

## **East Greenwich Pediatrics Policies Updated 09/23/2022**

### **Patient Centered Medical Home**

East Greenwich Pediatrics uses the Patient Centered Medical Home model of care, although we really think of it as a Family Centered Medical Home.

A Medical Home is an approach to providing total health care. In a medical home, the patient and their family joins a team of health care professionals to help with health care. The doctors and staff here at East Greenwich Pediatrics are all part of the medical home. We are here to help reach health care goals emphasizing, improving, and maintaining healthy lifestyles. We are committed to providing our patients and their families with support to manage their treatment plans. We coordinate care with other physicians to provide evidence-based care along with self-management support.

Within a Medical Home, the patient/family and care team work together. As an active member of the team, patients and their families can discuss their priorities and goals. Our clinical care team includes our doctor, nurse practitioners, psychologist, medical assistants, and our social worker / care coordinator. Our administrative staff consists of secretaries, office managers, and billing staff. The administrative staff duties include scheduling appointments, following up on test and referral results, coordinating referrals to specialists, maintaining accurate records, and assisting you in obtaining records and documents like school forms. To assist us with providing the best possible care, patients need to provide a complete medical history including any care received outside of our practice.

### **Respect for Our Providers / Employees**

In the spirit of collaborative care, our providers and staff need to be able to work closely and cooperatively with patients and families. This care is not possible without mutual respect and courtesy. East Greenwich Pediatrics has a zero tolerance policy for verbal or physical abuse of any of our providers or staff. We appreciate your kindness and patience. Any violation of this policy will result in the entire families' dismissal from our practice. If you have constructive feedback (positive or negative) about how your child or family is treated, we are always open to talking with you. Please discuss directly with one of our providers or our office manager.

### **Communication with Office**

The best way to reach the office to schedule an appointment or talk to a provider is by calling when the office is open. Calls regarding refill requests or questions about lab results should be made during our regular business hours as our answering service does not have access to your chart. If you have a concern that you would like to discuss in depth, we prefer you schedule an in-person or virtual (telemedicine) visit so that we can set aside dedicated time in our day to best address your concerns.

### **Phone Calls**

Phone calls initiated by a parent or patient with a provider (MD, DO, NP, PhD) that requires clinical judgment will be billed as a telemedicine visit. This includes after hours phone calls at night and on weekends. The family is responsible for any copays or cost sharing that is expected by your insurance.

### **Portal Messages**

Portal messages are for nonurgent issues only. We make every attempt to check messages frequently but there are times that portal messages may not be read by your provider for up to a week. If the question posed in the portal message requires more than a sentence to answer, please expect that we will call you back to discuss, and your insurance will be billed as a telemedicine visit. To set up a log-in for using a portal please talk with one of the secretaries. Due to confidentiality concerns, full portal access is available to parents of patients under 13 years of age.

### **Telemedicine / Virtual Visits**

Due to state licensing requirements, we can only do telemedicine (virtual) visits when both the provider and the patient are in Rhode Island. Telemedicine visits will be billed through your health insurance, and fees and copays that you normally would have with “in office” visits will apply. If after having a virtual visit, it is determined that your child should come in for a same day “in office” visit, you will not be charged a second copay. If you are concerned that your child may need antibiotics or steroids, schedule a virtual or in-office visit with us so that we can better assess your child’s needs. We do not prescribe these medications over the phone.

### **Well Visits**

We expect patients under our care to come in for all recommended well visits including yearly well visits for ages 3+. These well visits are crucial to tracking growth, monitoring development, providing preventative medical care, and keeping your child up-to-date on vaccines. We routinely mail out postcards 3 months before well visits are due, and are also working to develop ways to text / portal message reminders. It is the responsibility, though, of the caregiver to make sure appointments are made. If you have any questions about when your child is due for a visit, feel free to call us. You can also access this information in the health portal.

### **Vaccines**

Vaccines are a safe and effective way to prevent serious illness, promote health and wellness, and save lives. At East Greenwich Pediatrics, we recommend that all children receive vaccines according to the evidence-based schedule published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics. We are always happy to answer any questions or to discuss any concerns you may have about vaccines. Maintaining a fully vaccinated patient population is essential for the safety of our staff and patients, some of whom are young or immunocompromised. Noncompliance with the CDC vaccine schedule is grounds for dismissal from our practice.

### **Behavioral Health Care**

For patients under our care for behavioral health medication including medications for ADHD, anxiety, and depression, we require follow ups in the office (or virtual/telemedicine) at least every 3 months unless your provider decides the interval can be safely extended. It is the family's responsibility to make sure these follow ups are scheduled. Note that medications cannot be refilled if your child is not up to date with their follow up schedule.

### **Adolescent Health Care and Confidentiality**

We work very hard to establish trust with our adolescent patients as we work to prepare them to take responsibility for their own health care. We also understand (and appreciate!) that their families are THE MOST IMPORTANT part of them getting the health care they need. We ask that for well visits, patients who are 12 years old or older start their visit alone, and we will ALWAYS include parent(s) in person (or by phone / Facetime) at the end of the visit to review concerns and plans and to obtain consent for vaccinations. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's visit, please let your provider know.

### **Social Media Policy**

No social media communication, whether public posting or private messaging, is HIPAA compliant. Please do not engage in the exchange of patient information online, as it violates federal law. Taking photos or videos is not permitted in the office.

### **Split Families Policy**

We believe that divorce, separation, and custody agreements should not interfere with a child's medical care. A parent requesting medical treatment is individually responsible for the payment of that visit's medical bills. East Greenwich Pediatrics is not a party to your divorce agreement; we will collect copays and deductibles from the parent whose billing address is in the child's file, and will hold that parent responsible for any other payments associated with that visit. "Joint Custody" means that each parent has equal access to the child's medical record. Without a court order, we will not restrict either parent from access to their child's medical information. We will not call the other parent for consent prior to treatment, or to inform the non-present parent of the assessment and/or plan of care. We will discuss information pertinent to the child's history and exam with the accompanying parent at the time of the visit; it is the parents' responsibility to communicate with each other. If a court order requires us to do otherwise, we will be happy to comply after we receive a copy of it, which we will enter in the child's medical records. Should issues between parents become disruptive to our medical practice, we reserve the right to discharge a family from our care and responsibility.

### **Medication Refills**

If your child needs a refill on a medication there are three options: ask the pharmacy to electronically send us a request, leave a message on our refill line during our office hours, or send us a portal message asking for the refill. Please allow a couple days for the refill request to be processed. Note, refills will not be sent in if your child is overdue for an appointment. If this is the case, please call during office hours to talk with our secretaries to get an appointment scheduled and a refill message sent to your provider.

## **Referrals**

Referrals can be requested by leaving a message on our referral line during our office hours. Please leave the provider's name, phone number, specialty, and the reason for the visit so that we can properly process your referral.

## **School Forms**

School forms which include information from the well visit, vaccination history, and clearance for sports, are provided after every well visit beginning at age 2. These forms are automatically mailed home after the visit. If your child under age 2 needs a form for daycare, please ask your medical assistant at the beginning of your visit.

## **Transition to Adult Medicine Providers**

East Greenwich Pediatrics is committed to helping our patients make a smooth transition from pediatric to adult health care. This process involves working with teens and their families to prepare for the change from a "pediatric" model of care where parents make most decisions to an "adult" model of care where youth take full responsibility for decision-making. This means that we will spend time during the visit with the teen without the parent present in order to assist them in setting health priorities and supporting them in becoming more independent with their own health care.

At age 18, youth legally become adults. We respect that many of our young adult patients choose to continue to involve their families in health care decisions. Only with the young adult's consent will we be able to discuss any personal health information with family members. If the youth has a condition that prevents them from making health care decisions, we encourage parents/caregivers to consider options for supported decision-making.

We will collaborate with youth and families regarding the age for transferring to an adult provider and recommend that this transfer occur sometime between age 18 and 19. We will assist with this transfer process, including helping to identify an adult provider, sending medical records, and communicating with the adult provider about the unique needs of our patients.

## **Billing Policies**

East Greenwich Pediatrics participates with a number of health insurance plans including BCBS, United, United Healthcare Community Plan (Medicaid), Aetna, Humana/Tricare, Harvard Pilgrim, Tufts, Tufts Health RITogether (Medicaid). We keep an active list of which insurances we participate with on our website. If you have any questions about whether we accept your insurance, please call and ask! If you have out of state Blue Cross, Harvard Pilgrim, or United Health Rite Care or Tufts RI Together, please make sure the primary care physician (PCP) listed on your child's account is your doctor. The insurance company will not pay if your child's doctor is not the PCP, and you will be responsible for the balance. Please notify us of any changes to your insurance as soon as possible, and bring your insurance card to all appointments.

Phone calls to a provider initiated by a parent or patient that requires clinical judgment and any services that are provided beyond the "usual and customary" during a well visit may include copays or cost-sharing depending on your insurance plan.

When caring for your child, the providers at East Greenwich Pediatrics may run in-house tests like rapid flu / strep / urine test or provide medical supplies like nebulizers. In certain cases lab tests are sent out (i.e. cultures). If there are copays and deductibles associated with the test or medical equipment, they are billed from the applicable facilities (EGP, the lab, and/or the medical supplier). All patients receive the same high quality medical care in our office regardless of insurance coverage. You are responsible for anything your insurance does not cover. Please note that EGP is not responsible for billing issues from any facility other than our own, but we are certainly happy to assist with updating a diagnosis code to reprocess a claim if needed.

### **No Show / Late Policy**

If you are more than 15 minutes late to your appointment, your provider may not be able to see your child and we may ask you to reschedule. Behavioral health appointments with Dr. Pelletier will always be rescheduled if you arrive more than 15 minutes after the start of your appointment. Please call us at least one full business day in advance to cancel or change an appointment so that we can offer that time to another patient. After 3 no shows or late (same day) cancellations in a 12-month period, your family may be asked to leave the practice. This includes all medical and behavioral health visits. We understand that life happens, and considerations may be made on a case by case basis for extenuating circumstances.

### **Late Fees / Collections**

Please pay your copay when you check in for your visit. If you don't pay your copay at the time of visit, you will be charged a \$10 late fee. If your account maintains an open balance, it may be sent to collections and subject to an additional collection fee for each applicable date of service. If you're having difficulty meeting medical bills, please let us know as we are happy to help you set up a payment plan.

### **Returned Checks**

If you pay by check and your check is returned for insufficient funds (NSF), you'll be responsible for the amount of the check, plus a returned check fee of \$25. If more than one check is returned in any given period, we reserve the right to require all future payment by cash or credit card to prevent those situations from recurring.