

Office Financial Policy

Please bring your insurance card with you to every visit and present it on arrival to our staff for verification. We will file your insurance for you, providing you have supplied us with sufficient information to do so.

As you may know, there are very specific regulations about billing for health care services. As your health care provider, we are obligated to follow those regulations in how we report services provided to you. Additionally, every insurance plan may have different rules that vary from insurer to insurer. Your financial responsibility is determined by the rules of your insurance company, which we are obligated to follow. If you have questions, please check with your insurance plan.

WE DO NOT VERIFY BENEFITS; it is your responsibility to do so prior to your visit.

We specifically ask you to verify coverage of:

- 1) Vaccinations (shots).
- 2) Annual physicals/wellness/preventive medicine visit.
- 3) Hearing screenings.
- 4) Vision screenings.
- 5) Lab testing.

Insurance coverage is different for different health care plans. Not all services provided by our office are covered by every plan. It is your responsibility to know your insurance plan benefits. If a procedure/test is not covered, you will be responsible for the payment at the time of the visit.

Remember: Not all insurance plans are the same. Lower cost plans usually have higher co-pays and deductibles. Your Doctor's office does not have information about your personal insurance coverage. Again, it is your responsibility to verify coverage.

At the time of service, it is the policy of our office to collect:

- 1) All co-pays.
- 2) Deductibles
- 3) Non-covered services
- 4) Outstanding balances. (Once your insurance has fully paid, any outstanding balances are due immediately.)
- 5) Self-pay patients should come prepared to pay for the current visit.

*If you are unable to pay your bills in a timely manner, we are almost always willing to work with you to set up a payment plan, but you need to keep in touch with us. Ignoring calls from our business office about past due accounts will result in your account being

turned over to a collection agency and your dismissal from the practice.

Fees:

- 1) A \$35.00 fee will be charged for any checks returned for insufficient funds, **plus** any bank fees incurred.
- 2) \$25.00 (per child) to copy or transfer medical records. This covers staff time and supplies.
- 3) \$5.00 (per form) for school, camp or sports forms not brought/filled out at the actual visit. Payment is due when the forms are picked up and is not billed to insurance. We have a 3-5 day turnaround time for forms.

Our doctors do not discuss billing issues with patients. Concerns, questions, or requests regarding bills should be directed to the business office staff or office manager.

Office Visit Charges

Charges for each visit are determined by multiple factors, including but not limited to:

- The type or number of issues treated
- The complexity or time spent on the issues
- If the problems are covered at a routine wellness visit (routine health maintenance exam) and are significant or not part of normal care, then an ill visit charge is billed in addition to a well visit charge.
- Whether the visit is an initial or follow-up visit.

It is illegal to either over-code (charge) or under-code for visits and we do our best to represent our care on your charges. Our electronic medical record helps us to determine appropriate charges, but if you have concerns or questions about the charges, then please talk to the office manager.

Prescriptions

Refills will only be done during regular office hours— **not on weekends or evenings**. Please monitor your usage closely and call several days before you need your medication refilled. Please know the name and dosage of the medication to be refilled and have the name and phone number of your pharmacy ready when you call. It is poor medical practice to call in antibiotics without physically examining the child for serious illness. As a result, antibiotics will rarely be called in without a visit unless discussed at a recent previous visit. Prescriptions for controlled substances will never be called in after hours or on weekends.

It is your responsibility to know your pharmacy benefits: Do you need 30 day or 90 day prescriptions? Should you have a generic or brand name? What pharmacies can you use?

When should we take our child to the Emergency room after hours?

- 1) Epileptic seizures – call 911. **Do not** try to drive him/her to the hospital in your own car.
- 2) A head injury that causes unconsciousness. Injuries that do not cause unconsciousness can be discussed by phone if necessary.
- 3) Cuts that require suturing at night or on weekends or anytime with complicated suture repairs.
- 4) Suspected fractures.
- 5) Severe abdominal pain.
- 6) Severe breathing difficulty.
- 7) Not interacting or responding appropriately.

Other information

We require a current physical exam (date of the last physical exam less than 1 year ago) before completing any form clearing a child for sports, camps, school or college. We will complete these forms at no charge if presented at the time of physical, with the patient's portion of the form completed prior to the visit.

In addition, patients with chronic conditions (or certain diseases like diabetes, asthma, etc. or that are on chronic medications need annual physicals as well. Patients on medications for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or other behavioral problems must be seen in the office at least every 4 months to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment and to monitor for medication side effects. Failure to arrange or keep this appointment will result in our refusal to refill your child's ADD medication until an office visit is made. Finally, we do not administer vaccines without a recent physical exam; this is a recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Thank you again for trusting us with the care of your child. We look forward to partnering with you to ensure your child becomes the healthiest adult possible. If you have other questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us at 229-888-8121.

**SOUTHWEST
GEORGIA
PEDIATRICS, P.C.**

229-888-8121 Phone
229-888-6374 Fax

OFFICE HOURS

Mon-Fri as early as 8:00 a.m. – as late as 5:00 p.m.

by Appointment

Closed 12:00 noon-1:30 p.m. for lunch

**SOUTHWEST
GEORGIA
PEDIATRICS, P.C.**

Practice Information for Patients



Stacy N. Evans, M.D.

Craig A. Hughes, M.D.

Certified by American Board of Pediatrics

1110 N. Monroe Street • Albany, GA 31701

229-888-8121 • Fax 229-888-6374

Website: swgapeds.com

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/swgapeds/>

Practice Information for Patients

Our goal is to provide and maintain the best physician-patient (parent) relationship possible. Informing you in advance of our office policies allows for a good flow of communication and enables us to achieve this goal. Please read this **carefully** and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask a staff member.



Patient "Bill of Rights"

Thank you for trusting us with the care of your child. We take our role very seriously and strive to provide appropriate, quality health care services to all our patients. We also want to make your experience with our office and staff as rewarding as possible. We value and want your help and input at all times to help us continually improve. With that in mind:

- Feel free when checking in to get an estimate on current wait times for the physician you are seeing. If the wait time is too excessive for you that day, please re-schedule, ask for a pager or see if you can come back a little later.
- If you do not want to wait in the waiting area for any reason, then ask for a pager.
- Call us as soon as possible if your plans change or you need to re-schedule to avoid a missed appointment penalty.
- Tell our office manager about suggestions for improvements or concerns with staff interactions. If we don't know what we aren't doing or what we can do better, then we can't change!
- Make sure you understand the treatment, possible side-effects, follow-up and plan **prior** to leaving the office. You partner with us to provide good care.
- Call for help or clarification when needed. Please realize we can help more and have more options available during regular office hours when our staff is available and can help.
- Get an appointment if you feel one is needed. We try to give helpful advice when we can and avoid unnecessary office visits, but if a parent/patient is feeling uncomfortable then make sure you are seen.
- Keep up on regular/yearly visits as we can often stay ahead of or identify problems before they worsen.
- Make sure the schedulers know the issues you need to discuss, so we can do our best to give you the time you need.

- Contact us if treatment is too difficult or too expensive. We may have alternatives that we can offer. We do not want to cause any undue hardships, if possible.

Appointments

Our staff begins answering the phones, typically, at 8:00 a.m. on each morning of regular business days. Please call and get an appointment time before coming to the office as our office operates on an appointment system in order to see patients as timely as possible. We have same day appointments for acute illnesses. However, these appointments are filled on a first available appointment basis.

If you believe you need to be seen, please make every effort to call the office as early as possible during regular office hours rather than waiting until late or after hours/weekends. *If you have an emergency, then please call 911 or get transport to the emergency room.* If you have an urgent problem, then we will work you into the schedule as soon as possible and as dictated by the condition once you are assessed by our office staff. **We do not take walk-ins, as this will disrupt care, visits and wait times for all other patients.** Walk-ins will be treated like a phone call; an appointment time will be given in the current day's schedule.

***When scheduling your appointment, please notify the staff of the nature of the visit. We want to make sure our physicians have adequate time to evaluate and discuss your problems. If you have multiple issues, complicated issues or long standing problems, then extra time is usually needed.** If you have problems that are beyond the scope of a typical well visit, then please also notify the staff prior to your visit, so proper time can be allotted or a different visit scheduled, just for the additional issues to be addressed (like school/behavioral problems). Also notify the staff of any change in name, address, phone number, or insurance information. If possible, please arrive several minutes before your scheduled time. If you need to update insurance and other information before being seen, forms can be accessed and printed at our website www.swgapeds.com. The first visit of a new year always has forms to be reviewed or filled out.

When you arrive at the office for your appointment, please sign in with the receptionist. Please feel free to inquire about current wait times. Also, if you feel you have waited an unusually long time, then please re-check with the receptionist to make sure no errors have occurred with your scheduled visit. We make every effort to have you seen in a timely manner, which is why scheduling appropriately as above is so critical. However, due to emergencies, calls, and unexpected problems, we will sometimes get behind. We will try to notify you when we are significantly behind and offer to re-schedule if needed. We may occasionally need to reschedule an appointment and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation should this occur.

If you will be late for an appointment, then please notify us as soon as possible and tell us approximately how late you will be. We understand that situations arise that are beyond anyone's control. Often, we will be able to still honor your

appointment, but if it was a complicated visit or there will be a significant delay in arrival then you may be asked to reschedule. If it is for an acute illness, then every effort will be made to reschedule as soon as possible—often the same day.

If you must cancel an appointment, we ask you to call as far in advance as possible so your visit time can be used by another patient. Calling at or near the time of the appointment will be treated like a "no show." Notification of a "no show" will be sent and we will ask you to re-schedule if needed. Three "no shows" in a 12 month period of time or a history of frequent occurrences is grounds for dismissal from the practice.

We ask that you be considerate of our doctors and only contact us after hours for concerns that cannot wait until regular office hours the following morning. We have more staff support, access to patient information, options for care, and availability to schedule needed visits during regular office hours.

Office Hours

Our office is open Monday through Friday as early as 8:00 a.m. to as late as 5:00 p.m. We close from 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. each day for lunch. We are closed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. We often have shortened hours on other minor holidays.

On weekends and holidays, when an illness clearly cannot wait until the next weekday, please call the office at 229-888-8121 before 9:00 a.m. so our answering service can contact the physician on call (from our call group). We do not have scheduled appointments for the weekends and holidays, but our physicians will usually make arrangements if they think that a child needs to be seen. Most Saturdays, we do offer an acute illness walk-in clinic starting at 9:00 a.m., first come, first served. If needed, please call the office to see if this



is available. We do leave when everyone has been seen—not at a set time. Your health insurance may not pay the additional charge for a weekend visit. We will see only acutely sick children on the weekend (no physicals, chronic illnesses or vaccinations).

After hours, call the office number (229-888-8121) and the answering service will contact the on-call doctor (from our call group) to return your call. We make every effort to avoid sending you to the emergency room. However, at times this will be necessary. If this occurs, the emergency room doctors will evaluate and treat your child. The emergency room will only contact us if there is a need to admit your child or if follow-up needs to be arranged. *At this time, for patients other than newborns, we do use the pediatric hospitalist service for inpatient care. These are pediatricians who only take care of hospitalized patients and are in the hospital *to maximize consistency and timeliness* of your child's care. We will keep current with your child's care and stay, but will not be the primary physician taking care of your child in the hospital.

Telephone Calls

Our physicians provide you 24-hour coverage. Non-emergency calls should be made to our office during normal working hours so your records will be readily accessible. During office hours, our staff returns all phone calls. They are trained to answer routine questions and to give illness advice. Sometimes, due to the nature of the complaint, this will not be possible and they will need to discuss your concerns with the doctor before giving you advice. Our staff will not interrupt the physicians when they are with patients and as expected, the patients being seen in the office take priority over answering calls. We make every effort to answer all calls before the end of the day. Please be patient with our staff and know they will get back with you. If the staff feels you need to be seen they will assist you in scheduling an appointment. It is not possible for the doctor to return each call. If you feel you must speak directly with the doctor, they will return your call as time permits. Alternatively, you can schedule a consultation to sit down and talk with the doctor.