

July 7, 2009

Dear Friends,

Many of our office policies are being updated effective August 1, 2009. We would like to share more information with you, our valued customers, about the changes to our telephone policies, both during regular and after hours.

We also want to announce the launch of our **new web site** www.dekalbpeds.com. (July 2009). In addition to practice information and forms to download, you will find detailed information about common childhood illnesses, medication dosages, frequently asked questions, and what to do if your child is sick. There are also sections about wellness issues, such as immunizations, development and nutrition. The content was written by us and is very detailed, with links to other excellent web sites we have extensively reviewed. Please bookmark the site as your first stop to get accurate and timely information.

Our on call service for afterhours calls is changing on August 1, 2009. We have partnered successfully with the Children's HealthCare of Atlanta Call Center Nurse Advice Line for many years, but will end the relationship on August 1. This winter the call center began charging us for each call that you make to them and in August they are requiring us to use a different answering system. The costs have become prohibitive and as most practices have been doing, we discussed passing these costs on to you. However, instead of charging you to speak with the CHOA nurse we have decided to offer a more desirable service where you will have direct physician access 24/7 for your urgent and emergent needs. Many patients have come to use the CHOA advice line as a convenient way to get routine advice; we feel that there are now many reliable other options available for routine advice without the associated cost. Our new web site is filled with answers to commonly asked questions and you can take advantage of the nurse advice line provided free of charge by your insurance company. Our office nurse is available as a free service weekdays from 9am-5pm. A physician will remain available 24/7 for your more urgent and emergent needs, with a small fee associated with some of those calls at certain hours, as outlined below.

The amount of time and cost associated with providing many of the other telephone services you have come to expect has skyrocketed over the years. Our nurse line will remain unchanged and available Monday through Friday for your routine questions and to help you decide if an office visit is necessary. In order to continue some of our other services we now find it necessary to add a fee. This is based on the time involved, level of expertise necessary, documentation, and risk. In the past we have called in new prescriptions when medically appropriate rather than requiring an office visit (for example: pink eye). We will continue this service; however there will be a \$15.00 charge if you choose this option, both during regular office hours and after hours. You can always choose an appointment instead. The same will apply if you desire a phone consult with one of our providers about a chronic or long standing problem, rather than coming in for an office visit.

Summary of new fees:

- Prescription refill request after hours is \$15.00
- Telephone advice and a new prescription without an office visit (day and after hours) is \$15.00
- Phone consult with a provider, rather than an office visit is \$15.00, or more based on the duration of the call
- After hours: Calls sent to the physician on call after 9pm on weeknights, holidays, and after 2pm Saturdays for the duration of the weekend will incur a \$15.00 fee. This is waived if the call is related to an office visit in the previous 7 days or results in an office visit within the next 24 hours, or first available appointment.

The American Academy of Pediatrics in a policy statement supports charging patients for many types of phone services (telephone medicine), new CPT codes have been developed to provide guidelines for it, and most practices across the state and country have begun doing so. The insurance companies are the last to be on board, so we know that our new fees will not be covered by most insurance companies or allowed by others. We feel strongly, however, that we are providing valuable services and have structured our new fees in a reasonable way, allowing us to continue to provide the outstanding level of care you have come to expect. Please call with any questions or for more information.

Thank you for your understanding,

Jane Wilkov, M.D., on behalf of the Doctors and staff of DPC