

## General Clinic Guidelines

As a service to our patients, and to help you better understand how our office functions, we have put together the following guidelines. These guidelines are designed to help us provide you the optimal level of patient care and service. Our number one goal is your satisfaction and to fulfill this goal it is our responsibility to provide you with information that can assist with your care as a patient in our office.

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Oncology Affiliation:** Gulf Coast Urology is a division of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Oncology. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Oncology employs or is affiliated with over 947 physicians globally, including radiation oncologists and other specialists such as urologists, medical oncologists, hematologists, gynecologic oncologists, surgeons and pathologists—working together to deliver the most advanced integrated cancer care. Our Doctors practice independently as urologists and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Oncology functions as a management company.

**Appointment Availability:** Gulf Coast Urology makes every effort to schedule and keep appointments within a reasonable time frame. Once here, an appointment may take longer than planned or an emergency may arise, but every effort is made to stay on schedule. We do value our patients' time and we try our best to stay on schedule. However, there are times where the schedule may be delayed, but please note the Doctor spends as much time as needed with each patient and diagnosis. Should a patient run late, we will do our best to accommodate the patient. However, the appointment may need to be rescheduled. If an appointment is delayed or if the physician encounters a patient emergency, patients may be asked to reschedule as well. Please contact the check-in desk to inquire about the appointment and any delays encountered. Our office strives to provide appointments in a timely manner.

**Arrival times:** Each patient is provided an arrival time. The arrival time allows time to process paperwork, review demographics, and collect insurance cards and payment. As a new patient we ask that you arrive at the office 30 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment in order to give you time to complete your new patient paperwork. If paperwork is completed ahead of the appointment you will need to arrive 15 minutes prior. As an established patient we ask that you arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment.

**Telephone Systems / Appointment Reminders:** Gulf Coast Urology has implemented a personalized appointment reminder system. This system will provide patients with an electronic courtesy call for upcoming appointments. This will confirm your arrival time for the check in process. Patients will be prompted to confirm their appointment. If you have provided us with your email address you will also receive a confirmation reminder via email.

**Appointments:** Please be prepared to review general demographic information, update some basic medical information, show your current insurance card, and picture ID. Insurance cards and photo ID must be furnished at time of visit. Copays are required at time of visit and will be collected at check in. If applicable, deductibles and co-insurance will be collected at time of service. Payment is expected as services are rendered unless prior financial arrangements have been made.

**No-Show or Missed appointments:** Our goal is to provide timely access to appointments for patients. When patients fail to keep appointments, routinely arrive late, or have multiple requests for reschedules, other patients needing to be seen on an urgent basis may be denied access to a timely appointment.

**Scheduling:** The scheduler will gather key information that needs to be entered at time of scheduling. This will include demographic and insurance information. Every effort will be made to provide you with the earliest appointment available. There are certain diagnoses that may require prompt attention and those will be brought to the Doctor's attention accordingly. Appointments need to be scheduled as we do not generally

accept walk-ins. However, if you do have an urgent situation and you are an established patient, please try to call the office first: Our clinical staff will then review your symptoms and discuss with the Doctor on how to proceed.

**Urodynamic:** tests are scheduled bi-weekly. Our nurse travels from the east Coast to perform these services at our office and we offer this as a courtesy to our patients. Unfortunately life happens and in rare circumstances an appointment that has been scheduled may need to be canceled. We will reschedule these promptly and we do apologize for any and all inconveniences.

**Phone Messages:** Calls to our office are received through our automated phone service and then directed to the appropriate department. Every attempt is made to answer incoming calls. However, there are times when a patient will have to leave a voice message. All calls are returned within 24 hours. Please try not to call our office multiple times. Multiple calls can present delays in not only returning your call but other patients as well.

**Nurse Calls:** All patients are encouraged to call the clinical staff with any medical questions they have related to their care. Our trained and knowledgeable staff work hand in hand with our Doctors. They are able to provide assistance and in most cases assist with your immediate concerns. All calls are logged into the Electronic Health Record and reviewed by the Doctors throughout the day. Communication with the clinical staff will be the primary source of information. If the Doctor feels an appointment is need, one will be provided.

**Medication lists:** Please bring a complete list of all of your medications, as well as the strength and dose of each one. The will help clinical staff will ensure your medications are updated.

**Medication Refills:** For medication refills please contact the pharmacy first. The pharmacy will fax a prescription refill request to our office. This request will generate a response from the clinical staff. Medication refills, medication requests, and lost prescriptions require 48 hours' notice. If you have not been seen in the office for more than a year you will be asked to schedule an appointment before the refill will be approved.

**Lab and Imaging Results:** Our Clinical department is available to answer medical questions for our patients. However, they are not able to interpret patient lab or imaging results. Results will be discussed with each patient by their physician during a follow-up appointment. It is important for patients to come to their follow-up appointment to have their results interpreted and to ask questions if needed.

*\*\*Blood Work: Please notify the schedulers where you will be getting your labs drawn; this will help ensure that the results are sent to us prior to your appointment. Failure to provide this information can delay your results.*

**Pathology/Specimens:** Based on your diagnosis the Doctor may require additional testing on various specimens. This is discussed with you at the time of service. The specimen is then sent to an outside lab for further analysis. Depending on your health insurance benefits you may receive a bill from the lab.

**Procedures:** All procedures are scheduled in the Port Charlotte office on Thursdays for Dr. Weitzel and Fridays for Dr. Coronato. Appointment times are subject to change. Calls will be made the day before to confirm and provide the time of arrival. Please allow some flexibility when scheduling as times are subject to change. Port Charlotte is our main office, this is where all procedures (biopsy, vasectomy, testopel, gold markers) are done.

**Urine check:** Urine drop offs are no longer accepted without speaking to a nurse first. **Please call to speak with the nurse first.** Urine checks are for established patients *only* who suspect they may have a urinary tract infection. Therefore, in order to provide you with best level of care and service it is necessary to collect a urine

specimen. **Specimens can be collected at our mail office in Port Charlotte between 8:00am to 2:00 pm and Friday 8:00 am to noon.** Urine cups are provided upon check in. Please fill out the provided form to let us know any and all symptoms you have been having along with your pharmacy's contact information so we can call in medication if needed. Since urine specimens do not require an appointment patients may be asked to go home. Once specimens are checked and discussed with the Doctors we will call you with results. It may not be until the end of the day before this is done. If considered necessary by the doctor, the urine may be sent out for further testing. Please note you will be charged for a nurse visit for this testing.

If you are a **Hospital employee, have Blue Cross Blue Shield or Freedom Insurance**, you will be asked to take the specimen to the hospital or Quest. The labs we utilize for our urine cultures will not take these insurances. The clinical staff will provide you with the urine and proper lab order to deliver to either the hospital if you are an employee or Quest if you have BCBS or Freedom insurance; it is your responsibility to make sure the lab receives the specimen. Please note failure to advise us that you are a hospital employee or have BCBS or Freedom Insurance can incur additional expenses for the patient.

**Medical Records:** Gulf Coast Urology adheres to strict confidentiality guidelines and must receive an original signature and copy of a patient's driver's license prior to the release of medical records to the patient. In order to release your records you must sign the release form. This is required by law to protect your privacy. A written request must include the patient's full name, date of birth, SS#, physician's name, complete address and phone number. There is no charge for medical records request sent directly to another physician's office or medical institution. All requests are completed within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the request. A release form is available at [www.GCUrology21C.com](http://www.GCUrology21C.com). Please understand that your records contain protected health information that is highly confidential.

**Snow birds/ Seasonal residents:** It is essential for patients who live here seasonally to bring your medical records from your primary or urologist's office. If you cannot personally bring them in please arrange for them to be mailed/faxed to our office prior to your appointment. A medical records release will need to be signed prior to the release of your records.

**On-Call Physician:** A physician is on call 24 hours a day to deal with urological emergencies. If you believe you have a urological emergency go directly to the emergency room. The emergency room physician will be able to assess the problem and will contact the urologist on call if immediate urological care is needed. The urologist on call will not be able to assess your symptoms over the phone. Accessing care in an urgent care or emergency room setting will help you receive the right care at the right time. On call duties are shared with the local urologists on a rotating basis. If our Doctor encounters a patient emergency during his rotation patients may be asked to reschedule.

**Locations:** Gulf Coast Urology has three conveniently located offices. Port Charlotte is our main office, this is where **all procedures** (biopsy, vasectomy, testopel, gold markers) are done. We have an office in Englewood and Dr. Weitzel works there on Wednesday afternoons and an office in Punta Gorda and Dr. Coronato works there on Thursday afternoons. If these locations are closer for you please let the front desk know and they will schedule your appointment at the office of your choice.

**Surgeries:** All surgeries are performed at either the Gulf Pointe Surgery Center or Fawcett Hospital.

## **Referrals & Authorizations Explained**

### **Referrals**

The referral process serves as a way for your Primary Care Physician (PCP) and your specialist to communicate with each other. When a referral is issued to see a specialist, your PCP will tell the specialist the reasons for the referral and the goals for your visit. In other words, your PCP will help coordinate your visit and the referral helps to make sure you receive the proper care when you see the specialist.

Gulf Coast Urology is considered a specialist office and authorizations and/or referral are needed to be seen by our Doctors.

### **Whose responsibility is it to obtain the referral under my insurance plan?**

Your PCP is responsible for issuing the referral for office visits. However, you are responsible for making sure this is done before you see a specialist. We recommend you become familiar with and understand your PCP's specific referral procedures. Every office does this a bit differently, but most offices have a referral coordinator or other staff member dedicated to helping you through the process.

Once you become an established patient at our office we do provide as a courtesy and authorizations rep who will work on obtaining any and all additional authorizations and/or referrals on your behalf. However, it is still the patient's responsibility to make sure authorizations and referrals have been obtained prior to the appointments.

### **When you go through the process, make sure you follow the steps listed below (as well as any other steps your office may require):**

Make sure **Gulf Coast Urology** is in network with your insurance and your PCP has provided the reason for the referral.

Make sure your appointment is scheduled within the time frame covered by the referral, and that you know how many visits the referral covers.

Make sure you contact the office at least one business day before your appointment(s) to be sure your referral(s) were received and processed.

If your referral covers only one visit but we provide an appointment for additional visits our authorization rep as a courtesy our office will contact your PCP to extend the referral.

### **Prior Authorizations**

In the prior authorization process, your physician or other health care provider gets approval from your insurance company to provide you with coverage for certain services, such as specific procedures, or medications.

Please note that prior authorization as well as referrals and authorizations are not a guarantee of payment.

### **How is a prior authorization different from a referral?**

If your physician determines you need a service that requires a prior authorization, your physician will get approval for coverage from insurance company before this service is provided to you. If your physician determines you need to see another medical professional for specialized services, your physician will give you

a referral, which is an approval from your physician to see this specialist. Both insurance company and the specialist are told of your physician's approval.

**VA Insurance (Veterans Health Insurance)**

The VA requires authorization to be obtained for each patient to be seen at our office. As a courtesy to our patients, we try to obtain authorizations for your visits by contacting the primary care physician and/or the VA insurance. Without authorization we can't see you in the office as the VA will deny the charges and the patients will become the responsible party for the bill. This is not an option we want to provide to our patients. We believe if you have insurance it should be used and authorizations should be given in a timely manner.

In the event we are not successful on obtaining an authorization or referral we will contact you and ask for your assistance. We will contact you by phone and mail a letter advising you we have been unsuccessful and need your assistance. You can call member services or go to your local VA office. You can have the VA contact us directly or have them provide you with the authorization or referral number. Once this is provided to you can contact our office and we can have an appointment scheduled on your behalf.

**Bayfront or Fawcett Employees**

If you are a Bayfront or Fawcett Employee please make sure to let the front desk and clinical staff know. There are different guidelines set up for your lab work, and testing. We want to make sure we follow the protocol in place.

**Bayfront or Fawcett employee YES or NO (please circle one)**

Lastly, we value each and every one of our patients. We seek to provide the highest level of customer service and we strive to be efficient with providing care. We look to our patients to provide feedback and suggestions on how we can assist you or your loved ones. We appreciate you choosing us to provide you with the highest quality urological care.

I acknowledge receipt of a copy of the Clinic Guidelines

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient's Signature