

Harmony Women's Health

Office Policies

We are pleased that you have chosen Harmony Women's Health for your health care! In order to provide you with the best medical service, we want to let you know about our policies and procedures. Please feel free to discuss with us any questions you may have regarding these policies or regarding your medical problem and its treatment. We appreciate your suggestions to improve our services.

The Practice

Harmony Women's Health emphasizes patient choice in treatments. Towards that end, all options will be presented including some diagnostic and treatment methods that may be innovative or non-conventional, commonly referred to as complementary, alternative, or integrative medicine. Many of these services may not be recognized as standard medical practices and may be considered 'medically unnecessary' by insurance companies. Medications that are approved by the FDA for one condition may be prescribed for an unrelated or 'off-label' use and laboratory tests may be unconventional in their use or interpretation. Your questions regarding your care relative to these issues will be answered as honestly as possible.

Our practice is **EXCLUSIVELY AN OFFICE-BASED PRACTICE**. Dr. Metzger does not have hospital privileges because her patients come from such a wide geographical area. Therefore, we require that in addition to our care, you maintain a relationship with a physician in your town. Local patients have the option of identifying Dr. Metzger as their primary care physician. We are happy to cooperate with any of your health care providers that are willing to work with us to improve your health.

We may make recommendations for supplements and other recommended products. Although we carry these products at competitive prices, you are free to purchase these products from any source that you choose. However, the products available to healthcare providers are of a quality that may not be found in over the counter brands. We do ship supplements for a small fee.

General Office Policies

Office hours: Our office hours are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. Dr. Metzger sees patients all day Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Natasha tests immune patients Monday through Thursday. The office is closed on Fridays. We take a lunch break from 12:30 to 1:30. Our office is closed for major holidays (i.e., Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, December 25 & 26 and January 1).

Dr. Metzger is available to her patients 24/7 for urgent problems (this means that the problem can not wait until regular office hours) by calling 800-620-8321-you will either be connected with Dr. Metzger or you can leave a message. Potentially life-threatening emergencies should be handled by calling 911 or immediately going to the emergency room.

Communicating with our office: Our preference is to have routine business handled by email or FAX so that our phone lines can be freed up for urgent business. Appointments can be made by email: appointments@harmonywomenshealth.com or by calling the office at 650-229-1010. Quick questions should be addressed to: quickquestion@harmonywomenshealth.com. Messages can be left at any time on our voice mail at 650-229-1010 by following the voice prompts.

Dr. Metzger is available for quick questions via email: drdebmetz@pol.net. Emails are usually answered in the late evening on most days. **Do not use email for emergencies or urgent problems.** Medically relevant emails are printed and stored in the patient's chart and are copied with medical record requests (unless instructed otherwise).

Your initial visit: The initial visit will require 1 to 2 hours of your time, depending on the complexity of your problem(s). During that time, your history will be reviewed, a list of problems to be addressed will be made, and an exam will be performed (if indicated). Finally, we will outline a diagnostic and treatment plan and provide you with reading material.

Bring with you all your medications and non-prescription remedies in their original bottles so we can accurately review your regimen. We will then give to you a blank medication list for you to fill out prior to your next visit. List all your medications, both prescription and non-prescription, and present the list to us at your visit. You must list the dosage of each pill, how many you take, and when you take them. You also must note the name of the physician(s) who prescribed each medication. This will help us provide the best care for our patients.

Appointments: Please arrive on time for your appointment. Traffic in the Bay Area is often heavy, so allow extra time for driving. If you arrive late, we will try to work you in, but we will see patients who arrive on time before you. You have the option of having a telephone appointment instead of an office appointment. If an appointment cannot be kept, please call to cancel at least 24 hours prior to the visit (this means that a Monday appointment must be cancelled by 4pm on Thursday). **IF A PATIENT FAILS TO CALL TO CANCEL AN APPOINTMENT, IT IS OUR POLICY TO BILL THEM FOR THE MISSED APPOINTMENT.** Patients who frequently miss appointments will be asked to pay in advance for the reserved appointment time.

Telephone appointments: As a convenience to our patients, we are pleased to be able to offer the option for phone consultations in lieu of an office appointment. We recognize that these are often necessary for our patients from out of town and for our local patients who do not want to battle our infamous traffic. We offer comprehensive telephone consultations for new patients. However, we cannot prescribe medications for patients that have not been seen in the office for more than a year.

Telephone consultations are billed based on the amount of time utilized. There is no charge for short (less than 5 minutes) telephone calls from established patients. Unfortunately, insurance will not pay for phone appointments (this may be changing), even though they are in place of an office visit, so we will require a credit card number prior to the appointment.

Because of insurance regulations, we must code the visit as a phone consultation and not an office visit.

There are limitations to phone consultations. They are only appropriate when a physical exam is not necessary, i.e., for reviewing lab results, following up on the results of a treatment, or for answering involved questions.

Prescriptions: Not all prescription medications are covered by insurance pharmacy benefit plans. Individual insurance companies keep a list of preferred drugs called a drug “formulary” and different insurance plans have different formularies. If we prescribe a medication that is not on your plan’s formulary, it will cost you a lot more. In addition, in order to get a medication prescribed that is not on your formulary, we need to make additional calls and fill out forms which cause more work for us and delays in your treatment. To avoid these problems, please contact your insurance company or go on their website and get a copy of their formulary and bring it with you to your visit. One additional note- formularies change frequently, so you will need to get the most recent version on a regular basis- at least every three months.

Prescription refills: Refills for medication will be done at the time of your visit. You will be given sufficient refills until your next scheduled appointment. Therefore, it is important that you make every effort to keep your appointment. If you require a refill at other times, please have your pharmacist to FAX us at 650-229-1011, you can email us at Rx@harmonywomenshealth.com, or leave a phone message. When we receive a refill request, we will review your chart to see if you need to schedule a follow up appointment for re-evaluation. If you require an appointment, only enough medication will be prescribed to tide you over until the appointment. **Refills for any type of medication are not done after hours or on weekends.**

Special Needs of our Patients: Many of our patients have severe allergies and multiple chemical sensitivity. We ask our staff and patients to refrain from using any scented products (perfumes, hairspray, body lotion, etc) to prevent our sensitive patients from having a severe reaction.

Requests for medical records: Requests for medical records must be made in writing (it’s the law). The first copy is free. However, additional copies will be charged \$25 per inch. Charts that must be retrieved from storage (patients who were last seen 2 or more years ago) will take longer to process and will have an additional \$50 charge.

Research and teaching: Dr. Metzger sometimes has other health professionals or medical students observing her care of patients. It is your right to limit their participation in your care.

This office is involved in clinical research in an effort to advance the state of the art in this area. We may, from time to time, collect data from patient charts for tabulation and statistical analysis. If this is done, no names or other means of identification are recorded. Instead, a random computer-generated number is assigned to the data, in keeping with the

current recommendations from not the federal government and leading medical organizations. If you have specific questions or concerns, please speak to us.

Payment policies

Insurance: Major medical insurance plans cover the majority of the costs associated with treatment at Harmony Women's Health. However, we do not have contracts with insurance companies, which allows us to offer a range of services that in-service providers are not able to.

Running a practice designed to offer in-depth, comprehensive care of patients involves a complexity of care rarely seen in the primary care setting. Accordingly, our overhead and staffing requirements are higher and our fees must reflect this level of service. Only a portion of the fees you are charged are for direct care from Dr. Metzger. Our fees also reflect all the time spent on your behalf between visits. This may include:

- Reviewing records and questionnaires before your initial visit
- Reviewing and interpreting multiple reports (lab, x-rays, consultant reports, etc.) during the course of your treatment
- Making and receiving calls at all hours of the day and night from other health care providers, insurance companies, laboratories, pharmacies, home care agencies, etc. all of whom may be involved in your care.
- Preparing paperwork on your behalf for insurance companies for precertification of treatment or for non-formulary medications.
- Email access to Dr. Metzger for quick questions
- Office fees also act as a “retainer”, in that Dr. Metzger is available to answer calls 24/7 from patients with urgent problems.

Unfortunately, insurance companies have different ideas about usual and customary fees and may even determine after-the-fact that a treatment was not medically necessary. We can provide you with the necessary CPT codes so that you can find out ahead of time if and how much of a test or procedure your insurance will pay for. In addition, our office staff may be able to help with pre-authorizations and billing issues. Please understand that you and not your insurance company are responsible for your medical bills.

Payment policy: Full payment is expected at the time of service (cash, check, or credit card). Where full payment at the time of service is a financial hardship, we will stretch the payments over 90 days: 1/3 is expected at the time of service, 1/3 will be billed to your credit card in 30 days and 1/3 will be billed to your credit card in 60 days. We will provide you with a statement that you can submit to your insurance company so that you can be reimbursed. We are not Medicare, Medicaid, or Medi-Cal providers, nor do we bill them for services provided to you.

It is not our intention to exclude patients with limited financial resources. We will consider requests for reduced fees from those with limited financial resources.

Appointment cancellation charge: A full appointment fee may be charged for appointments cancelled without a minimum of 24 (twenty-four) hours notification (for a Monday appointment, it means canceling by 4pm the prior Thursday). For missed immune testing appointments you may be charged \$250. You should be aware, however, that payments for missed appointments will generally not be a covered benefit under your health plan.

Completion of forms: Patients often request that we fill out disability and medical leave forms, which we are happy to do. However, the time involved in processing these requests requires that we charge \$25-50 per form to be paid at the time of request. Physician letters require a considerable amount of time and patients will be billed accordingly.

MY SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT I HAVE READ THE ABOVE, MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED TO MY SATISFACTION, AND I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THESE POLICIES.

Signature

Date