

Williamstown
Medical
Associates

Serving the Community since 1958



Patient Centered Service

Demonstrable Quality of Care

Motivating Workplace

Welcome to **Williamstown Medical Associates**, PC, a division of **Berkshire Health Systems**. We are proud that you have chosen us to help with your medical care needs. This packet contains **important information** about us and about your health care. **Please review it carefully.**

The Care We Provide

We use a team-oriented approach to care for you. Physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners work closely together with our nurses, medical assistants, and many other professionals to focus on providing you with the best quality care while constantly working to improve our services. Getting established with new providers and a new practice can be a bewildering experience. We are here to help in your transition and are available to try to answer your questions and make the experience as smooth as possible.

More information about us and our providers can be found at **www.williamstownmedical.com**

Locations

Williamstown: 197 Adams Road, Williamstown, MA 01267

Telephone: 413-458-8182

North Adams: Ambulatory Care Center (ACC)

77 Hospital Avenue, 3rd Floor, Suite 300A

(On the Northern Campus of Berkshire Health Systems;
previously North Adams Regional Hospital)

Telephone: 413-664-5959

Office Hours at Both Sites:

8:00 AM – 5:30 PM

After Hours Care

Williamstown Medical Associates offers continuous after-hours, weekend, and holiday access to our on-call physician for established patients of our practice. **In case of an emergency, please telephone 911** for assistance or go to the nearest emergency room. For urgent but non-emergency medical issues that cannot wait until the office is open, please call either of the above office telephone numbers. Your call will be taken by our answering service and a message will be sent to the on-call physician, who will then contact and assist you.

Appointments

Scheduling appointments and planning for health care needs well in advance will help ensure that you can obtain the services you need. Lead-times for non-urgent appointments are often weeks or months for some providers. If you anticipate a need such as a routine exam, forms that need to be filled out for schools or for employment, or if you need an exam before a surgical procedure, **please contact us to schedule a visit with your provider as soon as you know an appointment will be needed.**

Please arrive **15 minutes before scheduled appointments.** If you are late, you may be required to reschedule. Be sure we have your up-to-date telephone number, address, and contact information. Please bring your **current insurance card and picture identification card** with you to every appointment.

If you **cannot keep an appointment, please notify us at least 24 hours in advance.** This allows us to use the time for others who may need it. This will help you avoid a **\$25.00 fee that we charge for patients who do not show for appointments.** As a courtesy, we will attempt to contact you to remind you in advance of your appointment. However, it is your responsibility to keep track of your appointments and to show up for them. The reminder is only done as a courtesy to you.

Same day appointments are offered on a limited basis. Please call us early in the day to check for availability. You may not be scheduled with your regular provider for these appointments but we will do everything we can to facilitate your care.

Bring your **medications** or your **up-to-date medication list** with you to every appointment. This helps us make sure we coordinate your prescriptions and treatment with those of other providers you may be seeing.

We will provide you with a **written visit summary** after each appointment. Please review it and ask us if you have any questions about it. Let us know if we need to make any changes to the summary. This is part of your permanent medical record.

Prescription refills

We are happy to assist with **prescription refills during our normal business hours.** Please contact your pharmacy or us and allow at least 48 hours (2 business days) for processing. There may be special requirements for the refill of certain medications, such as narcotic pain medications or other controlled medications. Our providers and staff will work with you to help address any issues.

Payments for Services and Health Insurance

Payments for deductibles, co-payments, co-insurance, and account balances are expected at the time of service. We accept many but not all types of insurance. Please check with your insurance company to confirm that we are on their list of providers if there is a change in your insurance.

We will not refuse services to those who are unable to afford the care we can provide. Our business office staff will work closely with you to develop a reasonable payment plan for any accounts due. We do expect that patients will communicate with us about their circumstances and will make appropriate efforts to develop a plan that not only works for them but also meets the guidelines of Williamstown Medical Associates. Our business office staff can provide details of what arrangements can be made for individual patient circumstances. Patients who are unwilling to work with us in good faith to make financial arrangements are at risk of being discharged from our practice.

Patient Care Services

Williamstown Medical Associates offers full **adult primary care and some medical specialty services**. We believe that ongoing, longitudinal care by a team of professionals offers care with the best quality and best outcomes. For this reason, you will be asked to identify a primary care provider who will work with our teams to meet your primary care needs and to help coordinate your overall health care.

For those patients **transitioning from pediatric care to the care of our adult medicine providers**, you will notice some differences. For example, you will begin to be asked to take a greater responsibility for your own care. The needs and increasing complexities of adult health care as well as behavioral health, women's health, and other services often require referral to outside specialists (Ob-Gyn specialists, for example, for some women's health issues; counseling for behavioral health, for another example). This may be a change from what your prior health care experience has been.

For all patients, you need to be an active member of your own health care team. Keeping regular appointments, obtaining diagnostic testing on time when scheduled, taking prescribed medications, following treatment programs as instructed, and keeping up to date on preventive care measures and immunizations are all parts of your responsibility. Helping you meet your health care goals, offering appropriate, safe treatment and education, and helping to coordinate your care, are all parts of our responsibility. Together, we can achieve the best outcomes when we all work as a team.

If you have special needs or circumstances, please communicate them to us. We will do our best to assist you in removing barriers to your receiving good medical care. Patients who do not work with us, who repeatedly miss appointments, or who do not follow treatment plans, place themselves at risk not only for poor health outcomes but also for being discharged from our practice.

Healthcare Service Limitations

For many reasons, we cannot provide all types of health care services to all of our patients. The practice of medicine continues to grow increasingly complex. We want patients to receive services of the highest quality from the sources that are best able to provide them. For example, we do not have certifications to provide physical exams for the **FAA** (Federal Aviation Administration) or for **CDL** exams (Commercial Driver's Licenses) for truck or bus drivers. The requirements for these services have grown beyond the scope of services we are able to provide. We do not provide comprehensive **travel** medical planning or full-service for travel immunizations.

We do not offer in-house imaging studies (x-rays, etc.), except for bone densitometry testing in our Williamstown office. We do not offer in-house laboratory processing of samples except for a very limited number of tests such as strep throat screening tests, simple "dipstick" tests for urine analysis, and a few others. Patients are referred to outside facilities for testing as determined by their provider. Phlebotomy services (blood drawing) are offered as described above. The processing of those samples is done at outside laboratories.

Laboratory and Diagnostic Imaging Services

We offer blood drawing services in our Williamstown office for the convenience of patients. The lab drawing station hours vary from our regular office hours. Please call the Williamstown office ahead of time to confirm the service is available when you want to go there.

For laboratory services at our North Adams office, we utilize the Berkshire Health Systems laboratory blood drawing station located at the main building entrance of the northern campus of Berkshire Health Systems (the former North Adams Regional Hospital).

A Berkshire Health Systems laboratory blood drawing station is also available for your convenience in Adams at the Depot Street office of the Adams Internists.

Holiday Closures

Both of our offices are closed on the following holidays. Please see the first page of this packet for information about after hours care and contacting the on-call physician.

New Year's Day: We close at Noon on New Year's Eve. We are closed all day on New Year's Day

President's Day

Memorial Day

Independence Day

Labor Day

Columbus Day

Thanksgiving Day: Closed all day and also closed on the Friday immediately after

Christmas Day: We close at Noon on Christmas Eve. We are closed all day on Christmas Day

(When New Year's Day, Independence Day, or Christmas Day fall on a weekend, our policy for closing the office varies. Please call if you need information about a specific day.)

Referrals, Medical Records Requests, and Medical Forms

Please allow at least **48 hours for the processing of referral requests**. This may take longer, depending on the nature of the request and the type of your medical insurance. Referrals for many insurers cannot be granted after the visit or event has occurred. Please be sure to contact us well in advance of any referral needs.

Completion of various forms such as for **disability, handicap placards for driving, FMLA, and PT-1 transportation requests** often take several days. Some disability forms require specialized information and not all of our providers are able to complete all types of disability forms. You will need to check with your provider about your individual circumstances. Please allow several days for completion of any forms and notify us well in advance of any deadline requirements. Completion of some forms may require an office visit with your provider. There may be a charge for some forms, such as for disability, and for others. In addition, a signed medical records release may be needed for some requests. Our staff will work with you to determine the various requirements and to fulfill the request.

If you need a **copy of your medical records**, please contact us or complete a medical records release form (one is included in this packet). You may mail the form to us after you complete it or drop it off when you are visiting one of our offices. Due to privacy laws to protect your information, we are unable to release copies of your records to anyone without your approval and signed consent. However, we may send records directly to another provider as part of your healthcare, such as on referral to a specialist from your primary care provider. There is no charge to send records directly to another provider as part of your health care. There is a modest charge to cover our expenses for us to make a copy of your records for release to you. Please ask us if you need additional details.

On-Line Information through Our Secure Patient Portal

We have implemented an on-line, secure, electronic patient portal to assist in two-way communication about your health and to provide you with access to selected portions of your medical records. Please ask us about signing-up for use of the portal. We will need your e-mail address and your consent to enable this feature for you. We plan to expand functions available through the portal on an ongoing basis to make it a more powerful tool for helping to manage your health care.

Patient Forms and Signatures

New patients are presented with a myriad of **forms to sign**. Established patients also periodically receive new or revised forms for signature. These are necessary for insurance purposes, to meet legal requirements, and to have patients document their receipt of important information about our practice and sometimes about their health issues. Please let us know if you have any questions about these forms. We can direct you to the right person to answer your questions. Some examples of various forms contained in this packet are explained below.

Notice of Privacy Practices and Communications to Others about Your Health Care

Your medical information is very important and we treat all your information **confidentially and securely**. Our **Notice of Privacy Practices** describes our pledge to confidentiality and how we handle your information. The notice also describes how your information may be shared according to strict state and federal laws. It also describes your **rights regarding medical information** about you.

Your medical information can be shared with your spouse, your family, or your friends, or others, **only with your written authorization**. We will ask you to list with whom you authorize us to share your information. If you do not give us authorization, we will not share your information. This could include speaking with others about your care or leaving messages about test results or about other health issues. It is your choice as to how you want us to communicate about your health. Please speak with us if you have any questions about the pros and cons of authorizing such information sharing.

Insurance Authorization Form

We ask you to sign a form authorizing us to bill your insurance company and to receive payment from your insurance company for services we provide to you. This could include more than one type of insurance you may have. We ask about employment and other personal information to help us verify any employer sponsored health insurance issues that may arise or for Workmen's Compensation insurance, for example.

Electronic Communication with You

We ask for your e-mail address and your permission to communicate with you electronically, as mentioned previously. Some patients find this method of communication more convenient. It also provides us with another way besides telephone contact and regular mail to communicate with you about your health care or about important issues at Williamstown Medical Associates. For example, we can notify our patients by e-mail when flu shots become available each year.

Form Asking about Race and Ethnicity

We want to provide you with health care that meets your medical needs in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way. We also want to be sure we communicate with you in a way that is meaningful to you. For this reason and to satisfy Federal Government requirements, we ask about your race, ethnicity, and language preference.

Other Forms

There may be other forms that we ask you to sign from time to time. Please be sure to let us know if you have any questions or concerns about them. A medical records release form is also included in this packet (see information about this on the previous page).

Summary and Our Pledge to You

We value and respect you as a patient. We are here to help you meet your health care goals. Please let us know how we may serve you better. If you have a problem or complaint, please let us know. You can contact us about problems at the phone numbers listed previously. A member of our administrative team will work to address your concerns or to bring them to the right person to do so. We want you to help us improve for the benefit of all of our patients. We are continuously working to make our practice better to offer you the best health care and best service that we can and to fulfill our mission of:

Patient Centered Service **Demonstrable Quality of Care** **Motivating Workplace**

Thank you for your trust and confidence in Williamstown Medical Associates.