



PRIVACY POLICY FOR INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING

Privacy of personal information is an important principle to Yaletown Nutrition. We are committed to collecting, using and disclosing personal information responsibly and only to the extent necessary for the services we provide. We also try to be open and transparent as to how we handle personal information. This document describes our privacy policies.

WHAT IS PERSONAL INFORMATION?

Personal information is information about an identifiable individual. Personal information includes information that relates to their personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, income, home address or phone number, ethnic background, family status), the health (e.g., health history, health conditions, health services received by them) or their activities and views (e.g., religion, politics, opinions expressed by an individual, an opinion or evaluation of an individual). Personal information is to be contrasted with business information (e.g., an individual's business address and telephone number), which is not protected by privacy legislation.

WHO WE ARE

Our organization, Yaletown Nutrition, includes Elizabeth Powell, Registered Dietitian and associate dietitians. We interact with a number of consultants and agencies that may, in the course of their duties, have limited access to personal information we hold. These include computer consultants, office security and maintenance, bookkeepers and accountants, a file storage company, temporary workers to cover holidays, credit card companies, cleaners, landlords and lawyers. We restrict their access to any personal information we hold as much as is reasonably possible. We also have their assurance that they follow appropriate privacy principles.

WE COLLECT PERSONAL INFORMATION: PRIMARY PURPOSES

About Clients

Like all Registered Dietitians, we collect, use and disclose personal information in order to serve our clients. For our clients or when we assess a client for someone else (E.g., an auto insurance company), the primary purpose for collecting personal information about you is to provide you with dietetic services. We collect information about your health and diet history, your physical condition and function, and your social situation

in order to help us assess what your needs are, to advise you of your options and then to provide the health care you choose to have. A second primary purpose is to obtain a baseline of health and social information so that in providing ongoing health services we can identify changes that are occurring over time. It would be rare for us to collect such information without the client's express consent, but this might occur in an emergency (e.g., the client is unconscious) or where we believe the client would consent if asked and it is impractical to obtain consent (e.g., a family member passing a message on from our client and we have no reason to believe that the message is not genuine).

About Contract Staff, Volunteers and Students

For people who are contracted to do work for us (e.g., temporary workers), our primary purpose for collecting personal information is to ensure we can contact them in the future (e.g., for new assignments) and for necessary work-related communication (e.g., sending out paycheques, year-end tax receipts). Examples of the type of personal information we collect for those purposes include home addresses and telephone numbers. It is rare for us to collect such information without prior consent, but it might happen in the case of a health emergency (e.g., a SARS outbreak) or to investigate a possible breach of law (e.g., if a theft were to occur in the clinic). If contract staff, volunteers or students wish a letter of reference or an evaluation, we will collect information about their work related performance and provide a report as authorized by them.

WE COLLECT PERSONAL INFORMATION: RELATED AND SECONDARY PURPOSES

Like most organizations, we also collect, use and disclose information for purposes related to our primary and secondary purposes. The most common examples of our related and secondary purposes are as follows:

- To invoice clients for services that were not paid for at the time, to process credit card payments or to collect unpaid accounts.
- Our clinic reviews client and other files for the purpose of ensuring that we provide high quality services, including assessing the performance of our staff.
- Registered Dietitians are regulated by the College of Dietitians British Columbia who may inspect our records and interview our staff as part of their regulatory activities in the public interest. In addition, as professionals, we will report serious misconduct, incompetence or incapacity of other practitioners, whether they belong to other organizations or our own. Also, our organization believes that it should report information suggesting serious illegal behaviour to the authorities. External regulators have their own strict privacy obligations.

Sometimes these reports include personal information about our clients, or other individuals, to support eh concern (e.g., improper services). Also, like all organizations, various government agencies (e.g., Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Human Rights Commission, etc.) have the authority to review our files and interview our staff as a part of their mandates. In these circumstances, we may consult with professionals (e.g., lawyers, accountants) who will investigate the matter and report back to us.

- The cost of some services provided by the organization to clients is paid for by third parties (e.g., auto insurance companies, private insurance). These third-party payers often have your consent or legislative authority to direct us to collect and disclose to them certain information in order to demonstrate client entitlement to this funding.
- Clients or other individuals we deal with may have questions about our services after they have been received. We also provide ongoing services for many of our clients over a period of months or years for which our previous records are helpful. We retain our client information for a minimum of ten years after the last contact to enable us to respond to these questions and provide these services (our regulatory College also requires us to retain our client records).
- If Yaletown Nutrition or its assets were to be sold, the purchase would want to conduct a “due diligence” review of the records to ensure that it is a viable business that has been honestly portrayed to the purchaser. This due diligence may involve some review of our accounting and service files. The purchase would not be able to remove or record personal information. Before being provided access to the files, the purchaser must provide a written promise to keep all personal information confidential. Only reputable purchasers who have already agreed to buy the organization’s business or its assets would be provided access to personal information, and only for the purpose of completing their due diligence search prior to closing the purchase.

You can choose not to be part of some of these related or secondary purposes (e.g., by paying for your services in advance). We do not, however, have much choice about some of these related or secondary purposes (e.g. external regulation).

PROTECTING PERSONAL INFORMATION

We understand the importance of protecting personal information. For that reason, we have taken the following steps:

- Paper information is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area.
- Electronic hardware is either under supervision or secured in a locked or restricted area at all times. In addition, passwords are used on computers.
- Paper information is transmitted through sealed, addressed envelopes.
- Electronic information is transmitted either through a direct line or as a password protected document via email.
- Staff are trained to collect, use and disclose personal information only as necessary to fulfill their duties and in accordance with our privacy policy.
- External consultants and agencies with access to personal information must enter into privacy agreements with us.

RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

We need to retain personal information for some time to ensure that we can answer any questions you might have about the services provided and for our own accountability to external regulatory bodies. However, we do not want to keep personal information too long in order to protect your privacy. We keep our client files for about ten years. We destroy paper files containing personal information by shredding. We destroy electronic information by deleting it and, when the hardware is discarded, we ensure that the hard drive is physically destroyed.

YOU CAN LOOK AT YOUR INFORMATION

With only a few exceptions, you have the right to see what personal information we hold about you. Often all you have to do is ask. We can help you identify what records we might have about you. We will also try to help you understand any information you do not understand (e.g., short forms, technical language, etc.). We will need to confirm your identity, if we do not know you, before providing you with this access. We reserve the right to charge a nominal fee for such requests.

If there is a problem we may ask you to put your request in writing. If we cannot give you access, we will tell you within 30 days if at all possible and tell you the reason, as best we can, as to why we cannot give you access.

If you believe there is a mistake in the information, you have the right to ask for it to be

corrected. This applies to factual information and not to any professional opinions we may have formed. We may ask you to provide documentation that our files are wrong. Where we agree that we made a mistake, we will make the correction and notify anyone to whom we sent this information. If we do not agree that we have made a mistake, we will still agree to include in our file a brief statement from you on the point and we will forward that statement to anyone else who received the earlier information.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION?

Yaletown Nutrition can be reached at:

1221 Homer Street, Suite 313, BC, V6B 1C5
PHONE (604) 992-3890

We will attempt to answer any questions or concerns you might have.

If you wish to make a formal complaint about of privacy practices, you may make it in writing to Elizabeth Powell, RD. She will acknowledge receipt of your complaint; ensure that it is investigated promptly and that you are provided with a formal decision and reasons in writing.

If you have a concern about the professionalism or competence of our services or the mental or physical capacity of any of our professional staff we would ask you to discuss those concerns with us. However, if we cannot satisfy your concerns, you are entitled to complain to our regulatory body:

College of Dietitians of British Columbia
Suite 409 – 1367 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6H 4A7
PHONE 604-736-2016
EMAIL: info@collegeofdietitiansbc.org

This policy is made under the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*. That is a complex Act and provides some additional exceptions to the privacy principles that are too detailed to set out here. There are some rare exceptions to the commitments set out above.

For more general inquiries, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Canada oversees the administration of the privacy legislation in the private sector. The Commissioner also acts as a kind of ombudsman for privacy disputes. The Information

and Privacy Commissioner can be reached at:

112 Kent Street, Ottawa ON, K1A 1H3

PHONE 1-800-282-1376

<http://www.privcom.gc.ca>