

# Informed consent for medical and healthcare treatment

## Information for consumers

### What is consent for healthcare and medical treatment?

Consent is an agreement between you and your health care provider to have, or not have, a healthcare test, treatment or procedure. An example of a procedure is surgery, and an example of a treatment is chemotherapy.

Your healthcare provider will ask you to give your consent before having any treatment or procedure. The only exception is in an emergency or lifesaving situation.

### What is informed consent?

Informed consent means that you make a voluntary decision to have or not have a test, treatment or procedure being recommended for you. This should happen after your healthcare provider has explained:

- Your condition and likely outcome (prognosis) of your condition
- The benefits, risks and expected outcomes of each treatment option available to you
- Details about the procedure or treatment, such as cost and who will perform it and where.

You have a right to receive information that is clear and specific to your situation and what matters to you.

### Communication for informed consent

Information about medical procedures and healthcare treatments can be complex. Sometimes you may receive information that you don't fully understand.

You have a right to receive information about your procedure or treatment in a way that you can understand. You can also ask questions at any time or ask for information to be repeated.

If you need help with your decision, you can involve someone to support you, like a family member or carer. Your healthcare provider will involve your substitute decision maker if you have one.

Your healthcare provider can also give you written information, or links to trusted information on the internet.



## How can I give consent?

The consent you need to give depends on the type of procedure or treatment. There are three main ways you can give your consent:

- Implied consent – this means you cooperate with a healthcare provider's instructions by showing your agreement. For example, you can extend your arm for a blood test.
- Verbal consent – you give your verbal agreement for a treatment or procedure that does not carry a significant risk. For example, when a healthcare provider asks to perform a physical examination.
- Written consent – you agree to have a treatment or procedure that is usually complex or has a higher risk, by signing a document (consent form).

It is important that you freely give your consent. This means that your doctor or healthcare provider, or your family, carer or friend should not pressure or force you to give your consent.

## Deciding together

You can decide together with your doctor or healthcare provider about the test, treatment or procedure that is best for you. You have the right to be involved in these decisions. This is called 'shared decision making'.

You can also choose to involve a family member, carer or close friend to help you to make your decision and remember information. This is called 'supported decision making'.

## Good questions to ask

Five good questions to ask in your consent conversation with a healthcare provider are:

- Do I really need this test, treatment or procedure?  
What are my options?
- What are the risks? Will there be any side effects?
- What happens if I don't do anything?
- What can I do to prepare?
- Is there any cost?

## For more information

About informed consent:

- [ISLHD website](#)
- [Healthdirect website](#)

About your healthcare rights:

- [Your rights and responsibilities – ISLHD website](#)

This information is also available in [Arabic](#), [Italian](#), [Macedonian](#) and [Portuguese](#), and in [Easy Language](#).

- [Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights](#)

For tips on communicating with your doctor or healthcare provider:

- <https://checkback.org>
- 5 good questions to ask: [5 questions to ask your doctor or other healthcare provider before you get any test, treatment, or procedure \(choosingwisely.org.au\)](#)

The questions are available in 32 languages.

**Need an Interpreter?** Interpreters are available if you need help to communicate with staff. The service is free and confidential. We will book an interpreter for you. Call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 to talk to someone before your appointment.

**Need an Aboriginal Health Worker?** An Aboriginal Health Worker (AHW) advocates for the needs of consumers who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. They provide support and information to help you. Tell staff you would like to speak to an AHW or if there is an AHW you would like us to contact.