

Consent in pregnancy

Giving your 'informed consent' for common procedures during your pregnancy journey

Knowing your rights during maternity care

During pregnancy and labour, your midwife or doctor will talk to you about having certain procedures or treatments. This includes physical examinations and tests.

You will need to choose whether to have, or not have, a procedure or treatment. This decision is called giving 'informed consent'.

Depending on the procedure or treatment, you can give your consent either by:

- Signing a form (written)
- Telling us (verbally), or
- Showing us you are willing to have a procedure or treatment (implied).



What does 'informed consent' mean?

- 'Informed consent' is the choice you make to have, or not have, a procedure or treatment that is recommended by your doctor or midwife.
- Unless your life is in great danger, you will always have the right to not give your consent.
- Consent can be written, verbal or implied:
 - **Written consent** means we will ask you to sign a form to say you agree to have a procedure or treatment, e.g. for a caesarean section
 - **Verbal consent** means we will ask you if it is ok, e.g.: *"Do you agree to me doing a vaginal examination to measure how dilated you are?"*
 - **Implied consent** means you show us that you are ready for a procedure or treatment. For example, you pull up your sleeve and hold out your arm when the midwife brings in the blood pressure machine.
- Before you choose to give or not give consent, you have the right to be fully informed about the procedure or treatment. We will do this by providing information to you in a way that you can understand. We will explain:
 - What the procedure or treatment is and why your doctor or midwife has recommended it.
 - The risks and benefits to you and your baby of having, or not having, the procedure or treatment.
 - Any other options that are available to you.
- It is important that you understand this information. You can ask questions or change your mind at any time, even after giving consent. Please talk to your doctor or midwife if you need more information, or if there is something you are worried about.
- We will write down your decision to have a procedure or treatment in your medical record.
- We will also write down in your medical record if you choose *not* to have a recommended procedure or treatment. We will continue to provide care for you and your baby.
- You may also need support to understand the information about a procedure or treatment, and to make a decision. Talk to your midwife or doctor if you feel you need support.

Procedures and treatments during labour and birth that require verbal 'informed consent'

- Feeling your stomach (uterus) to find your baby's position and to feel your contractions
- Listening to your baby's heartbeat – either with a Doppler or doing a cardiotocograph (CTG).
- Vaginal examinations to check your progress in labour and the position of your baby's head
- Breaking your waters
- Checks such as blood pressure, temperature, heart rate and blood sugar levels
- Taking blood samples and/or inserting an intravenous drip
- Giving you medications e.g.: for pain, feeling sick, or to speed up or slow your labour
- Helping you to position baby for skin-to-skin and breastfeeding
- After your baby is born - checking your vagina, blood loss, and feeling your stomach (uterus)
- Examining your baby, including checking heart rate and breathing, newborn reflexes, a 'top to toe' check and giving injections of Vitamin K and Hepatitis B vaccine
- If doctors or midwives in training will be present and doing any part of the procedure or treatment.



Procedures and treatments during pregnancy that require verbal 'informed consent'

- Abdominal and pelvic ultrasound
- Feeling your stomach to measure your baby's growth and position and find the heartbeat
- Checks such as blood pressure and blood sugar (glucose) monitoring
- Pathology such as urine, blood and vaginal swabs
- Vaginal or breast examinations
- If doctors or midwives in training will be present and doing any part of the procedure or treatment.

Procedures or treatments that require verbal consent during post-natal care (after your baby is born)

- Helping you hold your baby for breastfeeding and skin-to-skin
- Touching your breasts to show you how to express your milk
- Feeling your stomach to feel your uterus and checking your blood loss
- Looking at your wounds such as vaginal tears or caesarean section
- Examining and checking your baby (such as heart rate, breathing and blood sugar levels)
- Checking your blood pressure, temperature and heart rate
- Collecting blood samples from you or your baby.



You can find more information about ISLHD Maternity Services on our website:

www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/welcome-division-maternity-and-womens-health

Need an Interpreter? Professional interpreters are available if you need help to communicate with staff. Our staff can also ask for an interpreter. The service is free and confidential. We will book the interpreter for you. You can also call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 if you need to speak to us before your appointment.