



Your right to make your own medical decisions

If you are an adult, you have the right to make your own **decisions**. This means you choose.



You have the right to have the support you need to make decisions about your **medical treatment**.



Medical treatment is things to help you get better, or stop you getting sick. This means things like an operation, or medicine you take.

When do you make a medical decision?

First, your doctor should explain things like:

- what the medical treatment is
- why they say you should have it
- things that can be bad about the treatment
- if there are any other choices.



Doctors should tell you this information in a way that you can understand before asking if you agree to the medical treatment.



This is what the **Medical Board of Australia** says. It is an organisation that has information for doctors about how they should do their job.

How your doctor can help

Your doctor can help you understand by:

- explaining the information differently. For example, showing you a photograph or picture
- explaining slowly
- giving you time to think about the information.



Someone to support you

Making medical decisions can be hard. Sometimes we all need someone to help.

You might ask someone to:

- come to the doctor or hospital with you
- help you remember information
- help you think about the information.



Your doctor should speak to you, **not** the person supporting you.

Before you make your decision you might want to take time to talk to someone close to you.

Speak up

Speak up if you can **not** understand. Tell your doctors and nurses what help you need to understand.

If you are at a hospital:

- everyone can seem very busy
- you may see different doctors and nurses.





Remember to keep speaking up so your voice can be heard. This will help you find a doctor or nurse who takes time to listen.

If you feel scared:

- talk to your support worker or someone you trust if you can or
- ask to see the social worker or someone else at the hospital who can help.

Making your decision

Before you make your decision, your doctor should check that you understood the information.



When you are ready, you make a decision to:

- agree or
- **not** agree to the medical treatment.

In an emergency



If it is an emergency your doctor may **not** have time to talk to you about your medical treatment. The law says your doctor can give you medical treatment in an emergency without waiting for you to agree.

If you can not make a decision



Sometimes you may **not** be able to make a decision, even with support. For example, your doctor says you should have an operation. But you can **not** remember important information to make your decision, such as what happens if you do **not** have the operation.



If you can **not** make the decision, the law says who makes the decision for you. This person must try to make the decision you would want.

More information and help

For more information about medical decision making contact the **Office of the Public Advocate**.

Phone: 1300 309 337

www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au



For information about **self advocacy** see the:

- **Voices Together** website
www.voicestogether.com.au
- **Reinforce** website
www.reinforce.org.au

To ask for **individual advocacy** to help solve a problem, you can contact **VALID**

www.valid.org.au

Or visit the **DARU** website to find an advocate

www.daru.org.au



If you have a **complaint**, all hospitals and all health services should have someone you can talk to about your complaint. For more information contact the **Health Complaints Commissioner**.

Phone: 1300 582 113

www.hcc.vic.gov.au

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The information in this document is introductory and is intended as a general guide only.