



# 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](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au)



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

- **Voices Together** website  
[www.voicestogether.com.au](http://www.voicestogether.com.au)
- **Reinforce** website  
[www.reinforce.org.au](http://www.reinforce.org.au)

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

[www.valid.org.au](http://www.valid.org.au)

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

[www.daru.org.au](http://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](http://www.hcc.vic.gov.au)

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