# Better Care for People with Disabilities

## This booklet will talk about healthcare rights, where to go for help and ideas for getting better care. This has been produced by the Health Consumers’ Council and People With disabilities WA.

# Your healthcare rights

* In healthcare you have the right to:
* Be treated with respect
* Be treated with dignity
* Have privacy
  + Of your body
  + Of your information
* Be able to ask questions after an appointment
* Have information given to you in a way you prefer
* Get a second opinion from another doctor
* Be able to ask questions
* Refuse treatment
* Have your disability taken into account. If needed, this might look like:
  + Having someone stay with you
  + Receiving a special diet
  + Having a quiet area to wait in or a private room
* Have an interpreter
* Feel safe and be safe
* Have time to think and talk about things before making your decision
* Use a communication device
* Receive the same level of care as any other person
* Have an advocate or other support person with you
* Be listened to
* Have staff ask for your permission before doing things to you

The Australian Charter for Healthcare Rights booklet can be found at the Health Consumers’ Council WA website:   
< <https://www.hconc.org.au/consumer/being-involved-in-your-own-health/self-advocacy-resources/> >. This website also contains links to a number of other resources that can help you as you use health services.

You can ask for a copy of the Health Rights information in alternate formats by contacting the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality. Email [mail@safetyandquality.gov.au](mailto:mail@safetyandquality.gov.au) or call 02 9126 3600

[You can use this image to accompany this text <https://www.hconc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Charter-PDf.jpg>]

## Carer rights

A carer is a person who provides ongoing care to someone with a disability, chronic illness, mental health illness, or a frail person. Often this is a family member or friend. A carer is not paid to provide support

A carer has the right to:

* Be treated with respect and dignity
* Be listened to
* Be included in the decisions that will impact on them and their carer role
* Make complaints to services

The Western Australian Carers Recognition Act 2004 can be found at < <http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/wa/consol_act/cra2004197/> >

## Your responsibilities

You have the responsibility to:

* Answer the doctor’s questions honestly
* Cancel appointments if you can’t attend
* Let the doctor know if something is wrong

## Responsibilities of staff

All staff have the responsibility to:

* Speak to YOU
* Respect YOU
* Listen to YOU
* Be honest with YOU

Staff should get to know you by asking you or your carer questions. They should also take time to understand and watch your reactions to what they are doing. Tell the staff if you feel they aren’t listening to you.

## Do I have to have this treatment?

Your treatment is your choice

Before a doctor can do anything to you, they have to explain what the risks are.

“Informed Consent” can only be given if you know about your condition, what treatments can help you, and what is the safest treatment for you.

Here are some questions to ask:

* What is my condition called?
* What are the treatments called?
* What do I need to get better?
* What do I need to do?
* What is good about this one?
* What is bad about this one?
* How safe is this treatment for ME?
* Has the Doctor done this before?
* What happens if I do nothing?
* How much will it cost?
* How long will it take to recover?

If you have other questions about your health or treatment, you can use this online tool to help work out what you’d like to ask.

**Question builder**

This tool has been developed by the Australian Government to help people prepare for medical and healthcare appointments. It is free to use. You can use it to prepare for a medical appointment.

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder>

# Where to go for help

## Talking with staff

If the staff are not explaining things clearly you have the right to:

* ask them to repeat it
* ask them to slow down
* tell them if it is too much information at once
* ask them if you can talk in a different room or be in a quieter place
* ask them to explain it another way
  + ask the doctor to explain with dot-points
  + ask for a fact-sheet, brochure or website link

You can ask for:

* translators or interpreters
* support from a social worker or somebody else

## National Relay Service

The National Relay Service is a government initiative that allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have a speech impairment to make and receive phone calls. More information about the National Relay Service is at: <https://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/services-people-disability/accesshub/national-relay-service>

For help with making relay calls, contact the National Relay Service via SMS or Phone between 8am and 6pm Eastern Standard Time:

* Phone: 1800 555 660
* Fax: 1800 555 690
* SMS 0416 001 350
* Email: [helpdesk@relayservice.com.au](mailto:helpdesk@relayservice.com.au)

## If things go wrong

Every hospital and health service has a way for you to talk about any concerns you have regarding your care.

If something has gone wrong, you can put in an incident or complaint form.

You can talk to:

* Hospital complaints team
* A nurse unit manager
* A patient liaison officer
* A social worker
* Health Consumers’ Council
* People With disabilities WA
* Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre
* Health and Disability Services Complaints Office
* Patient Opinion

If your care was good you can let them know that too! Ask one of the staff for a feedback form.

## Patient Opinion

Patient Opinion Australia is an independent feedback service. You can share your story with them about any hospital in WA by email or phone anonymously. Patient Opinion publish the stories on their website and hospitals are expected to respond.

You can share stories where things have gone well, or where things need to be improved.

<https://www.patientopinion.org.au/youropinion>

1300 662 996

## Health Consumers’ Council

Health Consumers’ Council can help you talk to your medical team. They can also help you put in a complaint or listen to your issue.

* Website: <https://www.hconc.org.au>
* Phone (08) 9221 3422
* Freecall 1800 620 780 (country only)
* 0400 662 593 TEXT ONLY
* email [info@hconc.org.au](mailto:info@hconc.org.au)

## People With disabilities WA

People With disabilities WA provides non-legal advocacy to people with disabilities. Advocacy is the process of standing alongside individuals to ensure that people are able to speak out, to express their views and uphold their rights.

* Website: <https://www.pwdwa.org/>
* Phone (08) 9485 8900
* 0488 798 615 TEXT ONLY
* email  [info@pwdwa.org](mailto:info@pwdwa.org)

## The Health & Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO)

The Health & Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) is a government service that investigates complaints against any health or disability services.

* Phone (08) 6551 7600 or 1800 813 583.
* <https://www.hadsco.wa.gov.au/home/>

# **How to get better care**

## Speaking up if you feel unwell

Nobody knows your health like you do. You are the best person to notice any changes in your health.

Your family or carers who spend a lot of time with you may also notice changes in how you look or act, before health care staff notice these changes.

If you or your family or carer notice changes in your health, it’s important to let the right person know as soon as possible.

If you are in hospital, press the call bell and ask to speak to:

* A nurse
* A nurse unit manager
* Your doctor

If you still feel unwell after you have spoken to the doctor you can ask them for a second opinion or medical review

If you are at home you can speak to

* Your GP
* Your pharmacist
* HealthDirect – tel 1800 022 222
* After-hours GP services
* Emergency department

If you’re at home and it is an emergency, you can call an ambulance by calling 000.

## Be involved in your care

You might be cared for by different staff who will keep each other up-to-date about your care and treatment. You should be involved in this process so you know what is going on with your care. Your carer, family members or support workers can also be involved if you would like.

If the staff are not explaining things clearly, ask them to repeat it or explain the information another way.

## Taking medicines

Medicine is anything you take for your health and wellness. This includes over-the-counter medicine, prescribed vitamins, home remedies, recreational drugs and bush medicines. Make sure you don’t take any new medicine without letting the doctor or pharmacist know what you are currently taking. Sometimes you can have a bad reaction to mixing medicines.

Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about your medicines

* Are you allergic to anything? (e.g. medicine, food, wound dressings, gloves)
* Tell the doctor if your medicine makes you feel worse or sick
* Tell staff if you have difficulty swallowing your tablets
* Make sure all your medicine is explained to you before you start taking it

Keep a note or take a photo of the medicines you take at home. If you go to hospital, or to see another healthcare professional take this with you. Include:

* The name of the medicine
* The strength of the medicine (e.g. 500mg)
* How much do you take? (e.g. 1 tablet)
* When do you take it?
* Why do you take it?
* What does it do for you?
* When did you start taking it?

## Family and carer involvement

Family and friends who look after you can sometimes be called your Carer. They may talk to health staff on your behalf if you are too sick and not able to talk for yourself.

There are things available to support your family if you are in hospital.

Contact Carers WA for support and information.

Phone 1300 277 377 and ask for the Hospital Team

<https://www.carerswa.asn.au>

## Keep your mind well

Medical appointments, going to hospital and being sick can sometimes be stressful.

You might feel:

* Sad
* Worried
* Scared
* Confused
* Lost
* Anxious
* Angry
* Lonely

It is important you find someone to talk with about how you are feeling. You could talk to family, friends or your GP or specialist about your feelings. You could talk to a member of staff. Or if you’d rather talk to someone else, you can call Beyond Blue who are available 24 hours a day. You can also use the National Relay Service to make the call.

Beyond Blue Support Service

1300 22 4636

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/get-immediate-support>