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Patient Rights

What are patient rights?

As a patient, you have certain rights. Some are guaranteed by federal law, such as the right to get a copy of your medical records and the right to keep them private and secure. Many states have additional laws protecting patients. And some states, insurance plans, medical organizations, and health care facilities have their own patient bill of rights.

Some other examples of patient rights include:

- Being treated with respect
- Not being discriminated against in your medical care
- The right to refuse treatment
- The right of informed consent

What is informed consent?

Informed consent is an important patient right. It is a process in which your health care provider gives you the information you need to make decisions about your care. The types of care could be treatments, procedures, genetic testing, or clinical trials. The information should include the risks and benefits of the care, as well as details about your medical condition.

It's important that you understand everything before you give consent. Sometimes your provider will ask you to sign a form to give your consent. This is called written consent.

You have the right to change your mind about consent at any time.

Where can I get help with patient rights?

There are different resources that can help you if you have a problem with your patient rights:

- Many hospitals have patient advocates. These are people who can help guide you through the health care system and make sure that your rights are protected.
- Your state may have resources to help you, such as:
 - Your state may have an office (called an ombudsmen office) for problems with long term care.
 - Your state's department of health may be able to help.
 - States also have oversight agencies for insurance companies and various types of health care facilities and providers. These agencies make sure that these organizations and providers follow the rules so you can get quality care.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has an Office for Civil Rights (OCR). You can file a complaint with them if you feel you have been discriminated against in your medical care or if you think your health information privacy rights have been violated.


Start Here

- Patient Bill of Rights [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/managing-health-insurance/patients-bill-of-rights.html>] (American Cancer Society)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/asuntos-financieros-y-cobertura/manejo-del-seguro-medico/declaracion-de-derechos-del-paciente.html>]

- Questions Are the Answer [<https://www.ahrq.gov/questions/index.html>] (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality)
- When Health Care Providers May Communicate About You with Your Family, Friends, or Others Involved in Your Care [https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/consumers/consumer_ffg.pdf] (Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights) - **PDF**


Related Issues

- Are Clinical Trials Safe? [<https://www.cancer.gov/research/participate/clinical-trials/safety#informed-consent>]  (National Cancer Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/investigacion/participe/estudios-clinicos/son-seguros-los-estudios-clinicos>]
- Informed Consent [<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/making-treatment-decisions/informed-consent.html>] (American Cancer Society)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.org/es/cancer/como-sobrellevar-el-cancer/tomar-decisiones-sobre-el-tratamiento/consentimiento-valido.html>]
- Rights and Responsibilities of VA Patients and Residents of Community Living Centers [<https://www.va.gov/health/rights/patientrights.asp>] (Department of Veterans Affairs)
- Second Surgical Opinions [<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/second-surgical-opinions>] (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.medicare.gov/coverage/second-surgical-opinions>]

Specifics

- Your Medicare Rights [<https://www.medicare.gov/basics/your-medicare-rights>] (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Informed Consent [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=%22informed+consent%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Observing patient rights in the area of psychiatric health care in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40684343>]
- Article: Protecting the Right to a Family Through IVF. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40578917>]
- Article: Aspects of patient rights in a developing country: a qualitative study. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40437532>]
- Patient Rights -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Patient+Rights%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+2+Years%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [<https://www.ahrq.gov/>]
- Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights [<https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/index.html>]
- Find the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program in Your State [<https://theconsumervoice.org/get-help/>] (National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care)

Patient Handouts

- Informed consent - adults [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000445.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000445.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Consumer rights and protections [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001947.htm>]

Informed consent - adults [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000445.htm>]

Related Health Topics

End of Life Issues [<https://medlineplus.gov/endoflifeissues.html>]

Family Issues [<https://medlineplus.gov/familyissues.html>]

Patient Safety [<https://medlineplus.gov/patientsafety.html>]

Personal Health Records [<https://medlineplus.gov/personalhealthrecords.html>]

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The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

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