



Better Healthcare for People with Disabilities

2019

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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**



What is this booklet about?

People With disabilities WA (PWdWA) and the Health Consumers' Council WA (HCC) got together to write the booklet.

It is information about **healthcare** for people with disabilities. Healthcare is the care you get from doctors, nurses or other health workers.

This could be care in hospital, or a clinic or any other place you get healthcare.

We wrote the booklet to help people with disabilities get good healthcare and know what to do if their care isn't good.

We wrote the booklet in an easy to read way. We use pictures to explain some ideas. We explain words that are in **bold**.

You might like to get someone to help to read this paper. This could be your family, or a friend or support person.

You can also get the booklet in Plain English. This has more words and doesn't have the pictures.



Your healthcare rights



There is an **Australian Charter for Healthcare Rights**. This is information that describes the **rights** of people using Australian healthcare services.



Everyone has the right to get healthcare that is good and safe.



Here is a list of healthcare rights. When you use health services, you always have the right to:

Be treated with respect. Healthcare staff should be polite and kind. They should respect what you say and the choices you make.



Be treated with dignity. This is about respecting you as an adult, involving you in your care. It is also about respecting your rights to be private.

Staff should always ask you for your **permission** before doing things to you. You can make the decision if it is ok or not.



You also have the right to:

Be able to ask questions about your healthcare.

Be listened to.



Get a **second opinion**. This is asking another doctor what they think if you aren't sure about the first doctor's advice.



Have time to think and talk about things before you make any decisions.



Refuse treatment. It is your choice to decide whether to have treatment or not.



Other rights are that:

You get the same level of care as everyone else.



You feel safe and are safe.



You have privacy. This includes:

Keeping your body private.



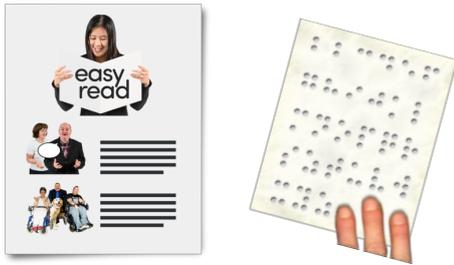
Keeping your personal information private.



You also have the right to any support you need because of your disability.

This can include things like:

Having an advocate or other support person with you. They can stay with you all the time if you want.



Getting information in the way that works best for you. For example, this could be Easy Read or Braille.



Having an interpreter in **Auslan** (sign language) or another language.



Having the diet you need, and help to eat and drink.



Having a quiet area to wait in or a private room.

Carer Rights



Carers also have rights in healthcare. A carer can be a family member, friend or other unpaid person who supports you.

Paid support workers don't have carer rights.



Sometimes carers might talk to healthcare staff if you are too sick and you can't talk for yourself.

In healthcare, a carer should:

Be treated with respect and dignity.

Be listened to.

Be included in talking about and making decisions that will affect them as your carer.



Carers also have the right to make complaints about healthcare services.

There is a law called the WA Carers Recognition Act. This contains the rules about carer rights.



Carers can get help from Carers WA. They can call them on 1300 277 377.

Responsibilities – You and your carers



You and your carers have **responsibilities**.

These are the things you must do to make sure you get good healthcare.



Your responsibilities include:

Giving doctors true answers when they ask questions. Make sure you tell them everything that is important.



Making sure you cancel an appointment if you can't get there.



Telling the doctor when something is wrong.

Responsibilities – Healthcare staff



These are the things healthcare staff should do, to make sure you get good care.

They should:

Ask questions to get to know you and your carer.

Speak to you (not just to your carer or person with you).



Treat you with respect.

Listen to you. Tell them if you feel they aren't listening to you.

Take time to understand you. This includes watching how you are feeling about what they are doing.



Tell you the truth about your health and any care you need.





Deciding about treatment

Doctors might tell you that you need some treatment to help you get better.

You can choose if you are going to have the treatment.



Doctors have to explain everything to you.

This includes telling you:

About your **condition**. This is information about what is making you sick.



About treatment to help you get better.



They need to tell you if there are any **risks**. This is things that could go wrong.



You need to understand this information before you can agree to have the treatment. This is called **Informed Consent**.



Some questions you can ask about your health and treatment:

What is my illness called?



What can I do to get better?



What is good about this treatment?

What is bad about this treatment?

Is this treatment safe for me?



Has the doctor done this treatment before?



How much will it cost?

How long will it take for me to get better?



What happens if I don't do anything?



Talking with staff

Sometimes you might find it hard to understand what healthcare staff are telling you.

You have the right to ask them to explain it again, or in a different way.

You can:

Ask them to repeat it – tell you again.

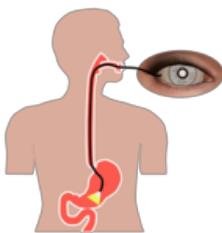
Ask them to slow down.

Tell them if it is too much information all at once.

Ask if you can talk somewhere else that is private and quiet.



Ask them to explain it another way. This could be with dot points, pictures or drawings.



Ask for more information, such as a fact sheet, brochure or a website link.



You can also ask for:



A social worker or other person to help you understand the information.



Interpreters or translators to help you understand in your language.



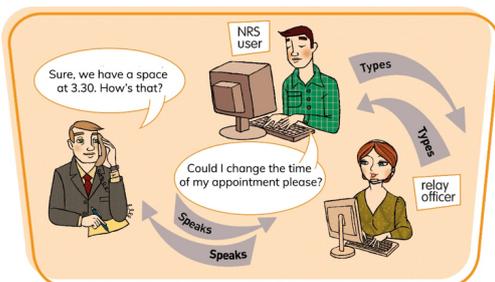
This includes sign language.



If you have difficulty hearing or speaking to people who use a phone, the **National Relay Service (NRS)** can help.

A relay call allows you to communicate with a hearing person who is using a phone even if you can't hear or don't use your voice.

You can find out how to use the NRS here: <https://www.dss.gov.au/contact/national-relay-service>





What can I do if things go wrong?

All hospitals and healthcare services have ways you can tell them about the care you got.



This could be telling someone at the health service such as:

A nurse or social worker.



A patient liaison officer.

Or filling in a complaint form.



You can also ask advocacy organisations to help you speak to the health service or put in a complaint.

These organisations include:

Health Consumers Council.

People With disabilities WA

Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre



Look on the last page of this booklet for how to get in touch with these organisations.



Health and Disability Services
Complaints Office (HaDSCO)

If you haven't been able to sort out your complaint with the healthcare service, you can contact **HaDSCO**.

This is a government service that looks into health and disability complaints.

Here is a link to information about HaDSCO:

<https://www.hadsco.wa.gov.au/docs/brochures/HaDSCO-Brochure-Easy-Read-English.pdf>



Patient Opinion is a website where you can write about your healthcare.

It can be a good way to let healthcare services and other people know if the service is good or not.

Here is their website:

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

How to get better care



Always speak up if you don't feel well.

You are the best person to know how you feel. Your family or carers might also notice you aren't well.



You need to let someone know as soon as possible.

If you are in hospital, press the call bell and ask to speak to a nurse or doctor.

If you still feel unwell after seeing the doctor you can ask to see another doctor.



Make sure healthcare staff tell you about anything that is happening. Ask them to explain it to you clearly.



If you feel unwell when you are at home you should let someone know.

This could be your GP or your pharmacist.

healthdirect

You could ring HealthDirect to speak to a nurse. Call 1800 022 222.

You could go to an after-hours GP service or go to a hospital Emergency Department.



If you're at home and it is an emergency, call **000** for an ambulance to take you to hospital.

Taking medicines

Medicine is anything you take for your health. This includes:

Medicine your doctor gives you on a prescription.

Medicine you buy without a prescription.

Vitamins.

Home remedies – for example home made mixture for a sore throat.

Bush medicines – made from wild plants.

Recreational drugs – such as marijuana.

You can sometimes get very sick if you mix different medicines.

To be safe, you must always tell your doctor or pharmacist what you are taking.





Always tell your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are allergic to anything. This could be medicine, food, dressings (like Band-aids) or anything else that is a problem for you.

Tell them if your medicine is making you feel sick or is making you feel worse.



Tell them if it is hard for you to swallow tablets.

Make sure they explain your medicines to you before you start taking it.

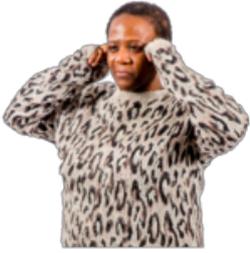


Make a list of all the medicine you take at home, so you can show the hospital or other service.

You need this information about each one:

- The name of the medicine
- Its strength e.g. 500mg
- How much you take e.g. 1 tablet
- When you take it
- Why you take it
- When you started taking it
- How it helps you





Keep your mind well

Being sick can make you feel stressed.

Having lots of doctor's appointments and going to hospital can give you lots of bad feelings.

You might feel:

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



Make sure you tell someone how you are feeling.

This could be family, friends or your doctor.

If you want to talk to someone else, you can call the Beyond Blue Support Service.

You can talk to someone any time of the day or night. You can use the National Relay Service to talk to them or get a language interpreter.



Here is their number: 1300 22 4636

How to get in touch with advocacy organisations



people with
disabilities
western
australia

People With disabilities WA

Phone: 9420 7292

Freecall: 1800 193 331

www.pwdwa.org

Email: info@pwdwa.org



Health Consumers' Council

Phone: 9221 3422

Freecall: 1800 620 780 (country only)

www.hconc.org.au

Email: info@hconc.org.au



Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre

Phone: 08 9388 7455

Freecall: 1800 659 921

<http://www.edac.org.au>

Email: admin@edac.org.au

Notes