

A department of health guide for patients about **consent and consent forms**

Before a doctor or other health professional examines or treats you, they need your consent. Sometimes, you can simply tell them whether you agree with their suggestions. However, sometimes a written record of your decision is helpful - for example if your treatment is invasive or requires sedation. You'll then be asked to sign a consent form. If you later change your mind, you're entitled to withdraw consent – even after signing.

What should I know before deciding?

Health professionals must make sure you know enough to enable you to decide your treatment. They will provide you with information to keep, as well as discussing the choices of treatment with you. Although they may well recommend a particular option, you're free to choose another. People's attitudes vary on things like the amount of risk or pain they're prepared to accept. That goes for the amount of information too. If you'd rather not know about certain aspects, discuss your worries with whoever is treating you.

Should I ask questions?

Always ask anything you want. As a reminder, you can write your questions in the space over the page. The person you ask should do his or her best to answer, but if they don't know they should find someone else who is able to discuss your concerns. To support you and prompt questions, you might like to bring a friend or relative. Ask if you'd like someone independent to speak up for you.

Is there anything I should tell people?

If there's any procedure you don't want to happen, you should tell the people treating you. It's also important for them to know about any illnesses or allergies which you may have or have suffered from in the past.

Can I find more about giving consent?

More information is available from NHS choices.

Please see the website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/consent-to-treatment

Who is treating me?

Among the health professionals treating you may be a doctor in training; medically qualified but now doing more specialist training. They range from recently qualified doctors to doctors almost ready to be consultants. They will only carry out procedures for which they have been appropriately trained. Someone senior will supervise - either in person accompanying a less experienced doctor in training or able to advise someone more experienced.

What about anaesthesia?

If your treatment involves general or regional anaesthesia - where more than a small part of your body is being anaesthetised, you'll be given general information about it in advance. You'll also have an opportunity to talk with the anaesthetist when he or she assesses your state of health shortly before treatment. Hospitals sometimes have pre-assessment clinics which provide patients with the chance to discuss things a few weeks earlier.

Will samples be taken?

Some kinds of operation involve removing a part of the body (such as a gall bladder or a tooth). You would always be told about this in advance. Other operations may mean taking samples as part of your care. These samples may be of blood or small sections of tissue, for example of an unexplained lump. Such samples may be further checked by other health professionals to ensure the best possible standards. Again, you should be told in advance if the samples are likely to be taken.

Sometimes, samples taken during operations may also be used for teaching, research or public health monitoring in the interests of all NHS patients. The NHS trust treating you will have a local system for checking whether you're willing for this to happen.

Photographs and videos

As part of your treatment some kind of photographic record may be made - for example X-rays, clinical photographs or sometimes a video. You will always be told if this is going to happen. The photograph or recording will be kept with your notes and will be held in confidence as part of your medical record. This means that it will normally only be seen by those involved in providing you with care or those who need to check the quality of care you have received.

The use of photographs and recordings is also extremely important for other NHS work, such as teaching or medical research. However, we will not use yours in a way that might allow you to be identified or recognised without your express permission.

What if things don't go as expected?

Among the 25,000 operations taking place every day, sometimes things don't go as they should. Although the doctor involved should inform you and your family, often the patient is the first to notice something amiss. If you're worried, for example about the after-effects of an operation continuing much longer than you were told to expect, tell a health professional straight away. Speak to your GP, or contact your clinic - the phone number should be on your appointment card, letter or consent form copy.

What are the key things to remember?

It's your decision! It's up to you to choose whether or not to consent to what's being proposed. Ask as many questions as you like, and remember to tell the team about anything that concerns you about any medication, allergies or past history which might affect your general health.

Questions to ask health professionals

As well as giving you information health professionals must listen and do their best to answer your questions. Before your next appointment, you can write some down in the space below.

Questions may be about **the treatment itself**, for example:

- what are the main treatment options?
- what are the benefits of each option?
- what are the risks, if any of each option?
- what are the success rates for different options - nationally, for this unit or for you (the surgeon)?
- why do you think an operation (if suggested) is necessary?
- what are the risks if I decide to do nothing for the time being?
- how can I expect to feel after the procedure?
- when am I likely to be able to get back to work?

Questions may also be about **how the treatment might affect your future state of health or style of life**, for example:

- will I need long-term care?
- will my mobility be affected?
- will I still be able to drive?
- will it affect the kind of work I do?
- will it affect my personal/sexual relationships?
- will I be able to take part in my favourite sport/exercises?
- will I be able to follow my usual diet?

Healthcare professionals should welcome your views and discuss any issues so they can work in partnership with you for the best outcome.

After reading this information, if you have any questions or comments, please bring them to the attention of our nurse or consultant.

Do you have feedback about our health services?

Phone: 0300 123 1807
8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
Text: 07899 903499
Email: kentchft.PALS@nhs.net
Web: www.kentcht.nhs.uk/PALS

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Unit J, Concept Court
Shearway Business Park
Folkestone
Kent CT19 4RG

If you need communication support or this leaflet in another format, please ask a member of staff or contact us.



Donate today, and help the NHS go above and beyond.
Visit www.kentcht.nhs.uk/icare

i care . . .

Registered charity no. 1139134