



Know Your Rights

Resources

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, www.ahrq.gov, “Questions Are The Answer” campaign and “20 Tips To Help Prevent Medical Errors.”

Know Your Rights

The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.

Helping health care organizations help patients

You have rights and a role regarding your treatment and care. This brochure has questions and answers to help you learn about your rights and role as a patient. Knowing your rights and role can help you make better decisions about your care.

What are your rights?

- You have the right to be informed about the care you will receive.
- You have the right to get important information about your care in your preferred language.
- You have the right to get information in a manner that meets your needs, if you have vision, speech, hearing or mental impairments.
- You have the right to make decisions about your care.
- You have the right to refuse care.
- You have the right to know the names of the caregivers who treat you.
- You have the right to safe care.
- You have a right to have your pain addressed.

- You have the right to care that is free from discrimination. This means you should not be treated differently because of:
 - age
 - race
 - ethnicity
 - religion
 - culture
 - language
 - physical or mental disability
 - socioeconomic status
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
 - gender identity or expression
- You have the right to know when something goes wrong with your care.
- You have the right to get a list of all your current medicines.
- You have the right to be listened to.
- You have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect.
- You have the right to have a personal representative, also called an advocate, with you during your care. Your advocate is a family member or friend of your choice.

Ask for written information about all of your rights as a patient.

What is your role in your health care?

You should be active in your health care because your choices will affect your care and treatment.

- You should ask questions.
- You should pay attention to instructions given to you by caregivers.
- You should share as much information as possible about your health with your caregivers. For example, give them a list of your medicines, vitamins, herbs and supplements. And remind them about your allergies.

What is the role of your advocate?

- Your advocate can be with you to provide support during your care.
- Your advocate can get information and ask questions when you cannot.
- Your advocate can remind you about instructions and help you make decisions.
- Your advocate can ask for help if you are not getting the care you need.

Find out if there is a form to fill out to name your advocate. Ask about your state's laws regarding advocates.

Can your advocate make decisions for you?

Yes, if they are your legal guardian or if you signed a legal document giving them the power to make decisions for you. This document may be called a health care power of attorney.

Can other people find out about your disease or condition?

Health care providers must keep some details about your health private. You can sign a form if you want health care providers to share information with others.

What is "informed consent?"

Informed consent means that you understand your treatment choices and their risks. Your caregivers should help you understand the treatment choices and risks, and what will happen if you are not treated. Informed consent is required if you are asked to try any experimental treatment.

Can the organization take pictures or videos of you?

Yes. They can take pictures, videos, or other images and recordings to be used for your care or treatment, or to identify you. The staff must ask your permission to use the images or recordings for any other purpose.

What happens if something goes wrong during treatment or with my care?

If something goes wrong, you have the right to an honest explanation and an apology. These should be made in a reasonable amount of time.

How do you file a complaint?

- Contact the state agency that licenses or certifies the health care facility.
- Call the health care facility or health system so that they can correct the problem.
- Contact The Joint Commission with complaints about our accredited organizations. You can fill out a complaint form at www.jointcommission.org/report_a_complaint.aspx.

Questions to ask before you enter the health care facility

- Can a family member or friend be present during your care to provide emotional support?
- Can you have an advocate? An advocate is a family member or friend. Do you need to sign a form so your advocate can get information about your care?
- Is there an interpreter available if you need one? Are forms available in your preferred language?
- What will be done to make sure you don't get an infection?
- Is there a form you need to sign about life-saving actions, like resuscitation?
- Is there a form you need to sign about life support?
- Does the organization allow members of your religion to visit and pray with you?
- What kind of security does the facility have? Is there a 24-hour guard or alarm system?
- Whom do you speak to if there is a problem? How does the organization handle complaints?
- Can this facility provide all the treatments or services you need?
- Are there any treatments or services the facility will not do for religious reasons?
- If you cannot get the treatments or services, will you need to go somewhere else?
- How can you get your test results and a copy of your medical records?