



Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

The Western Australian Public Patients' Hospital Charter



Delivering a **Healthy WA**

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Rights of public patients

Access to health services

- 1. Can I choose to receive public hospital services as either a private patient or free of charge as a public patient?**

Australian residents and visitors from some countries have the right to choose to receive public hospital services as a private patient, with an associated cost or free of charge as a public patient.

- 2. If I choose to be a public patient will I still get the services I need?**

You have the right to receive treatment based on your health needs regardless of whether you are a public or a private patient.

- 3. If I live in a rural area will I still get the services I need?**

You have the right to have access to a range of hospital services wherever you live in Australia. If the services you need can't be provided at your local hospital you will be referred to a centre where they are available.

- 4. Can I have access to an interpreter?**

You have the right to be given information about your condition in a language you understand. If you need help in talking to the health professionals who are responsible for your health care, you can ask for a professional interpreter.

5. Will I have to take part in medical training research?

You have the right to agree or to refuse to take part in the training of health professionals and in medical research.

6. Will I be treated with respect and consideration if I choose to be a public patient?

All patients have the right to be treated with respect, dignity and consideration for privacy and special needs.

7. Can another person accompany me?

You have the right to be accompanied by a family member, friend, carer or other person of your choice, if appropriate, while your medical care is being discussed with you. You are not obliged to have a support person with you and it is your choice to do so.

Information about your health care

8. Will I receive safe and high quality health care?

All patients have the right to receive safe and high quality health care provided with professional care, skill and competence in every encounter with a public hospital. As a public patient you are entitled to a safe, secure and supportive health care environment. You can assist by informing health care staff if something has been missed in your care or if an error might have occurred. You should also explain to the health care professionals responsible for your care any circumstances that you feel may make your health care riskier or any safety concerns that you may have.

9. Will the treatment be explained before I agree to it, and can I refuse to have the treatment?

Before agreeing to the treatment you have the right to have the planned treatment clearly explained to you in terms you can understand, including possible risks and alternatives.

You have the right to take part in decision making about your health care and refuse treatment*.

10. May I seek a second medical opinion?

In Western Australia all patients have the right to seek a second medical opinion. Where possible, hospital management will assist you to get a second medical opinion, depending on the nature of your illness, your location and the availability of alternative practitioners.

11. Will hospital staff discuss my continuing health care before I leave hospital?

You have the right to receive information about your continuing health care before you leave hospital.

12. Can I see the information that the hospital has about me? Can it be shown to anyone else?

You have the right to apply for access to your medical records under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* and to have personal information kept confidential.

* Note: Involuntary patients receiving treatment under the *Mental Health Act 1996* may be given treatment without their consent.

Complaints procedure

13. Can I complain if I am not happy about the treatment I have received?

You have the right to comment on or complain about the health care you have received and to be given information about how to make a complaint.

Summary of public patients' rights in Western Australian public hospitals

All patients in Western Australian public hospitals have a number of fundamental rights to:

1. choose to receive free public hospital services as a public patient, or to choose to be treated as a private patient in a public hospital with an associated cost
2. receive treatment based on your health needs, and, if you need to wait for this treatment, to be told how long you can expect to wait
3. have access to a range of public hospital services regardless of where you live in Western Australia
4. have access to an interpreter
5. agree or refuse to participate in medical/nursing student training or medical research
6. be treated with respect, dignity and consideration for your privacy and special needs

7. be accompanied by a family member, friend, carer or person of your choice where appropriate
8. receive safe and high quality health care provided with professional care, skill and competence
9. receive a clear explanation of any proposed treatment, including possible risks and alternatives, before agreeing or refusing to have the treatment
10. seek a second opinion
11. be given information about your continuing health care before you leave the hospital and to have your contact details kept up to date
12. apply for access to your medical records under the *Freedom of Information (Fol) Act 1992* and to have personal information kept confidential
13. compliment, comment or complain about the health care you receive, and to be given information about how to lodge a complaint, without compromising your health care.

Mental health patients

The *Mental Health Act 1996* provides a number of extra rights for patients receiving psychiatric treatment. For more information please contact the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist on telephone (08) 9222 4462 or visit

www.chiefpsychiatrist.health.wa.gov.au

How to make a complaint

If you wish to compliment, comment on, or complain about, any service received in a public hospital, you should first raise your concerns with attending hospital staff either verbally or in writing. This should be done as soon as you are able to do so.

Many public hospitals in Western Australia have a complaints co-ordinator or a patient liaison officer with whom you can raise your concerns. You can also contact hospital management or the Chief Executive/ Executive Director of the health service about your complaint. If your complaint can't be resolved by the hospital, you can contact the Office of Health Review.

Health and Disability Services Complaints Office

GPO Box B61
PERTH WA 6838

Free call number: 1800 813 583
Telephone: (08) 9323 0600
Facsimile: (08) 9221 3675
TTY: (08) 9323 0616

Mental health patients

Voluntary mental health patients have the same rights as other public patients.

However, because of the special circumstances of mental health patients detained against their will (involuntary patients), there are agencies established to protect their rights.

These agencies are:

- Council of Official Visitors
- Mental Health Review Board
- The Office of the Chief Psychiatrist.

On admission, involuntary mental health patients are provided with a pamphlet detailing their rights and contact details of these agencies.

Information on public patients' responsibilities

How you can help – Patient First program

There are a number of things patients can do to help hospitals provide better care.

A *Patient First* booklet is available as part of the Patient First program. This program aims to help consumers become more active, informed and involved in their care. This booklet is available from your hospital and online at:

www.safetyandquality.health.wa.gov.au

Information you should provide

- Tell hospital staff about your (and your family's) medical history and about any treatment or medication you were receiving when you were admitted to hospital.
- Tell hospital staff of any changes in your condition including problems you may have with any treatment you are receiving.
- Tell hospital staff of any special needs you have.
- Follow treatment instructions, or let hospital staff know if you are unwilling or unable to do so.

Consideration for staff and other patients

- Try to keep hospital appointments. If you need to cancel an appointment, you should advise the hospital as soon as possible. For more information or to reschedule an appointment contact Outpatient Direct on 1300 855 275.
- Be considerate to the needs of other patients. Respect the role and dignity of hospital staff and their right to a safe and pleasant work environment.
- Be aware that public hospitals have a special role in training health professionals. With your consent, your treatment may provide an opportunity for such training.

Further information

If you would like more information on the rights of public patients in Western Australian hospitals, a detailed booklet is available. For copies of the booklet please ask hospital staff or alternatively, contact the Department of Health at:

Communications Directorate
Department of Health
189 Royal Street
EAST PERTH WA 6004

Telephone: (08) 9222 2044

Email: communications@health.wa.gov.au

If you have further queries, please contact the relevant hospital or
www.health.wa.gov.au/services

Information about the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights is available from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare website at
www.safetyandquality.gov.au

Delivering a Healthy WA



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in alternative formats on request for
a person with a disability.**