



Consent: agreeing to have treatment

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) explains about giving consent – that is, agreeing to have treatment. There are various ways you can give consent and different circumstances in which we will ask for your consent. Please remember that we want you to have all the information you need to be able to make a decision.

What is consent?

- Consent is the process of you agreeing to have treatment
- Consent should involve a joint discussion between you, your parents (if you want) and the doctors treating you
- Giving consent does not always involve signing a form – sometimes, we may ask you for your verbal consent, that is, saying that you agree to treatment

Can I give consent?

If you are aged under 16 years

If you are under 16 years old and judged to be able to understand the treatment suggested, including any risks and what might happen if you do not have treatment, you can agree to have treatment without input from your parents (This is called being 'Gillick/ Fraser competent'). However, if you decide not to have treatment, and the doctors think it is best for you to have treatment, your parents can overrule your decision. If you cannot understand the treatment suggested, your parents can give permission for you. Ideally, we want you and your parents to agree what treatment is best for you.

If you are aged 16 or 17 years old

If you are aged 16 or 17 years old, the law states (Mental Capacity Act) that you must be the person who is asked to give consent if you are capable. Your parents can only consent for you if you are legally unable to consent for yourself.

If you are aged 18 years or over

If you are aged 18 years or over, your parents cannot consent for you, even if you cannot consent for yourself. The only exception to this is if they have an order from the Court of Protection.

What should I understand before I give my consent?

The person asking you to give consent should explain clearly

- What the treatment involves
- The benefit to you of having treatment
- Whether there are any material risks to you
- Whether there are any alternatives for you
- What might happen if you do not have treatment

It is fine to ask for some time to think about your decision and talk it over with your parents or other people you trust. If you need emergency treatment (to save your life or prevent serious harm to you), we might not be able to give you much time, but in most cases, you can think it over.

Can I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any point after giving consent. If you do change your mind, we will usually ask you to note this on the consent form. Changing your mind will not affect how we treat you now or in the future.

If you have any questions, please ask the healthcare professional asking for your consent. You can also contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (Pals) office if you have any questions. Visit their office in the main reception area, telephone them on 020 7829 7862 or email them at pals@gosh.nhs.uk.

Further information

If you want more information about the law around consent, please ask the Pals Office for a reading list.

Notes

