

# Information for pregnant women about 'consent' for tests or treatment

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**This leaflet is to provide information for those who have been asked to provide consent for a procedure or test.**

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## Introduction

During pregnancy and labour a woman will be asked, by her midwife or a doctor, to choose whether to have certain tests or procedures performed.

The conversation should allow time for a discussion about the purpose of the tests, an opportunity to decide not to have some tests performed and a chance for the mother to ask further questions. This process is called 'giving informed consent'. You may change your mind about having certain tests or treatment once you have been given information and had time to weigh up the pros and cons of having or not having what has been offered.

Some procedures, such as Caesarean birth, do require the mother's signature on a consent form after discussion of all treatment options and risks associated with each option.

Following a landmark legal case in 2015 (Montgomery vs Lanarkshire Health Board) health care professionals are obliged to give women information which:

- Clearly outlines the potential treatment options, ensuring she is aware of both advantages and complications for each option.
- Discusses the consequences of not performing any treatment or intervention.
- Ensures patients have access to high-quality information to aid their decision-making; this might include an information sheet or video clip link.
- Gives women adequate time to reflect before making a decision.
- Check women have fully understood their options and the implications.
- Documents the above process in the maternity record.
- Documents any changes of mind about the treatment / test by the patient in the maternity record.

**Relatives cannot sign on your behalf, nor can they refuse to allow you to have treatment if you choose to have it, or insist that you have a treatment you have decided not to have, even if they don't agree with your decision.**

## What happens in an emergency?

In an emergency, the general principle is that if you are unable to make your wishes known, treatment can be given without your consent in order to save your life or prevent serious deterioration in your condition. Where possible, the team will involve your next-of-kin in decisions about your care.

**Making a decision**

**Shared Decision Making**

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

**Ask 3 Questions**

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation.  
\* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shephard et al. These questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options. A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;34: 279-83.

AQUA <http://www.advancingqualityalliance.nhs.uk/SDM/>

Information on various procedures are available on request.

## Further information

Additional information can be accessed by following the links below;

- <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/news/membership-news/og-magazine/december-2016/montgomery.pdf>
- <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/patients/patient-information-leaflets/pi-understanding-risk.pdf>
- Consenting-to-treatment-2019.pdf ([www.birthrights.org.uk](http://www.birthrights.org.uk))
- <https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-ask-3-questions/>

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

J Siddall, Consultant Obstetrician July 2003

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