Informed Consent

What is informed consent?

Informed consent is a legal procedure that requires you to give permission before you have a medical or surgical procedure. It's also required before you join a clinical study.

Your healthcare provider will explain everything to you and answer your questions. Then you will be asked to sign a form. The form confirms that you have received the information and that you give permission for the test or treatment. You should feel comfortable taking your time to read the whole document so that you know exactly what you are signing.

What do I need to know?

Before you have a test or treatment, you need to know:

- What condition or illness you have
- Why a particular test or treatment is needed or recommended
- The benefits of having the test or procedure
- The most common risks and possible complications of the test or treatment
- The chances of success for the recommended test or treatment
- How long the recovery period after the test or treatment, if any, is likely to be
- Other options besides the test or treatment being recommended

You can choose to refuse the test or treatment as long as you understand your options and the risks and possible complications if you do not take your provider's advice.

Are there any special rules?

In some situations there are special rules for informed consent. For example, if you are severely hurt and you need emergency treatment, you may not be able to give consent. Children, or people who cannot legally make their own decisions, cannot give consent for themselves. Each state has laws about when informed consent is needed and when treatment may be given without it.

What is the benefit of informed consent?

Being informed is very important for a trusting and successful relationship with your healthcare provider. Be sure to ask all of the questions that you may have so that you fully understand your condition and treatment choices. This will help you play an active role in your healthcare.

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