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## Hospitals feedback and complaints

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### Summary

- Give hospitals feedback about your experience as it helps them to improve that service.
  - If you are not happy with the way you have been treated, try talking directly to the healthcare professional involved.
  - If you are not satisfied with their response, you can make a more formal complaint to the organisation they work for.
  - If you still do not feel your complaint has been dealt with, you can contact the Office of the Health Complaints Commissioner.
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Victoria has an established process for managing complaints about healthcare and treatment. The larger hospitals have consumer liaison officers (also known as patient representatives and patient advocates) available to patients and their families who wish to raise concerns about their treatment or experience. Smaller hospitals often encourage feedback through their senior management team, such as the Chief Executive, Director of Nursing or Quality Manager.

Every healthcare organisation that provides a service welcomes feedback, as it helps reinforce what the organisation is doing well and highlights areas where they can do better. If you are unhappy with the way you were treated in hospital, you have the right to complain and to have your concerns acted on.

Healthcare services should make information about their feedback processes easy to find. The **Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights** includes information on what it means to you as a patient, consumer, family member or carer using the Victorian health system. The **Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care** also provides useful information on your healthcare rights.

### Your right to give feedback

As a healthcare consumer in Victoria, you have the right to safe and high-quality treatment and care. Letting the hospital know when you have had a good experience helps them continue to provide good care. Telling them about things you feel could be improved or complaining about an aspect of care you were not happy with also helps them to monitor their levels of care and provides opportunities for improvement.

### When to give feedback or complain

Many hospitals have surveys you can complete when you are discharged from their care. Take this opportunity to let them know about both the positive and negative aspects of your experience. You can also give feedback about your care at any time.

You can make a complaint if you feel that you:

- were not given satisfactory healthcare
  - were not treated with dignity and respect
  - were not given adequate information about services or treatments, including costs, so that you could make an informed choice
  - were not given access to information about your healthcare when you asked for it
  - did not give consent and your health information was shared inappropriately with others
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- had your privacy breached.

## **How to make a complaint**

If your complaint is about how a hospital has treated you, they often have a formal complaints process that they can guide you through. Information about how to put in a complaint is usually located on the health service's website, and complaint or feedback forms are often attached.

### **Speak directly with the healthcare professional**

Try to talk with the person you have an issue with about your concerns. This is the quickest and often the easiest way to address an issue. In your conversation, outline your concerns and how the incident or issue has affected you. It may be a misunderstanding or something more serious.

### **Speak with someone representing the hospital**

If you feel talking directly to the healthcare professional has not helped improve the issue, or you are uncomfortable with this approach, you can make your complaint to the health service. Talk with a clinic manager or staff at the reception desk to find out where you should direct your complaint or feedback.

All health services have processes for hearing and dealing with complaints within their organisation, and many hospitals have a consumer liaison officer or patient representative who deals with patient feedback.

Make your complaint in writing and let them know how you would like the situation resolved (a written reply or a meeting). Follow up with them if you do not receive a response.

### **Lodge your complaint with a regulatory body or authority**

If you are unhappy with the responses from the healthcare professional involved or the hospital they represent, you can lodge a formal complaint with an independent, regulatory body or authority. It is a good idea to phone the regulatory body or authority first, to make sure they are the right organisation to deal with your complaint. They will explain their complaints process to you.

Regulatory bodies and authorities include:

- **Office of the Health Complaints Commissioner**
- **Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)**
- **Victorian Ombudsman**
- **Commonwealth Ombudsman**
- **Mental Health Complaints Commissioner**
- **Disability Services Commissioner**
- **Private Health Insurance Ombudsman**
- **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (Privacy Commissioner)**
- **National Health Practitioner Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner**
- **Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner**
- **Australian Competition and Consumer Commission**.

## **Where to get help**

- Your hospital
- Patient liaison officer or patient representative
- Office of the Health Complaints Commissioner

- Your GP (doctor)

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Department of Health and Human Services

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