
Patient-centred care explained

Summary

- Patient-centred care actively gives you and your family a say in the decision-making process when planning care and treatment.
 - Patient-centred care is about respecting your individual preferences and diversity.
 - Patient-centred care involves recognising your needs and respects your right to make health decisions and choices.
 - Patient-centred care includes your right to comment, ask questions and make complaints about your healthcare.
 - Patient-centred care is also known as 'person-centred care'.
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Patient-centred care is about treating a person receiving healthcare with dignity and respect and involving them in all decisions about their health. This type of care is also called 'person-centred care'. It is an approach that is

linked to a **person's healthcare rights**.

When healthcare professionals and services give you patient-centred care, it puts you at the 'centre' of your healthcare by:

- treating you with dignity, respect and compassion
- communicating and coordinating your care between appointments and different services over time, such as when making a referral from your GP to a specialist
- or sharing your care between a community health service and a hospital
- tailoring the care to suit your needs and what you want to achieve
- supporting you to understand and learn about your health
- helping you find ways to get better, look after yourself and stay independent
- involving you in your healthcare decisions at all times.

Patient-centred care is more than just how your healthcare professional treats you. It is also about how healthcare services and governments create and support policies to put healthcare users, not healthcare organisations, at the centre of care.

Expect patient-centred care from your healthcare professional

You have the right to access healthcare when you need it. You should expect that this care supplied by your healthcare provider is safe and of high quality.

In order to provide patient-centred care, it is important for healthcare professionals to have a good understanding of your care preferences. They should respect these preferences throughout your treatment.

When your care is patient-centred, your healthcare professional clearly explains your treatment options and respects your decisions. They will acknowledge you for who you are and will not discriminate based on your background, beliefs or preferences.

Actively participate in your care

A key part of patient-centred care is you becoming involved in your healthcare. This means you choosing to be included in all decision making, healthcare planning and goal setting. Doing this can actually improve your healthcare.

Your healthcare professional should give you all the information you need to make informed decisions. You should be given time and opportunities to ask questions, and talk to your carers, family and friends before making decisions.

In situations where many treatments are needed at the same time, being actively involved in your care will help you and your healthcare team to plan and prioritise your treatments. This helps everyone know and understand what is happening and why.

You also have the right to refuse any treatment that you are not comfortable with, except when you are not able to give your consent. If you lose the capacity to make decisions, you have the right to appoint someone to make medical decisions for you.

Respect in a healthcare setting

You have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. This includes respect for your privacy and the confidentiality of your health information.

You have the right to be treated without discrimination based on your age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, employment status, cultural background or religious beliefs. Healthcare should be delivered in a way that respects all your beliefs, particularly those related to treatment options, death, dietary needs and the gender of the person treating you.

Respect in a healthcare setting also includes healthcare professionals and services trying to arrange your appointment times to fit in with your needs and lifestyle.

Good communication with patient-centred care

High-quality healthcare is based on open and effective two-way communication between you and your healthcare professional. This means understanding what your healthcare professional says and if you prefer a language other than English, it may include using a professional interpreter.

Your healthcare professional should explain information about your care and condition, including treatment options, prognosis, potential side effects and costs. You should be able to ask questions.

Understanding more about your treatment will help you make informed decisions about your care.

Providing a safe environment

Your healthcare professional should provide an environment where you feel safe. This includes, for example, providing care and treatment that includes personal privacy, such as separate treatment rooms, screens or curtains.

How to identify patient-centred care

If you are not sure whether you are receiving patient-centred care, ask yourself:

- Have you been asked about your needs and preferences and is the healthcare professional working to meet them?
- Have you been encouraged and supported to be involved in planning and making decisions about your care?
- Have you been given the option to involve a support person or interpreter during consultations?
- Has the communication from the healthcare professional been clear and in language you can understand?
- Has the healthcare professional shown respect for you as an individual?
- Does the healthcare organisation have clear feedback process? Have you been told about these?

What to do if you're unhappy with your care

If you feel your doctor, other healthcare professional or healthcare service is not putting your needs and choices at the centre of your care, you have the right to say something about it and to have your concerns addressed. This also applies if you are unhappy with the way someone you are caring for is being treated.

Healthcare organisations should make their feedback process easy to find and use.

Speak to your healthcare professional first

If you have a problem with a healthcare professional or service, start by talking with them to explain your concerns. It may be a misunderstanding or something that can be easily resolved.

Make a complaint to the healthcare service

Healthcare organisations often welcome feedback so they can improve their services. Sometimes, it highlights a bigger problem that they need to address. Some hospitals have a patient representative who deals with patient feedback. Your healthcare organisation should clearly tell you how you can give feedback about your experience. If not, ask your healthcare professional or look on the healthcare organisation's website for more information.

Make a complaint to the Health Services Commissioner

If you are unhappy with the health service's response, contact the **Health Complaints Commissioner** on (03) 1300 582 113 or **make a complaint online**. This free and confidential service assists in resolving complaints about Victorian health services.

When you contact the Health Services Commissioner, an Assessment Officer will:

- listen to your feedback
- give you information about what to do next
- help you to take your complaint to the healthcare service
- refer your complaint to the Health Services Commissioner for further action if needed
- put you in contact with other people who may be able to help.

Where to get help

- **Health Complaints Commissioner**, Complaints and Information, call 1300 582 113
- **Office of the Public Advocate** call 1300 309 337 (24 hours a day)

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