

GAS HOUSE LANE SURGERY

Consent – it’s your decision

How you should be involved in decisions about your healthcare and treatment

What is this Leaflet about?

It tells you about your right to make decisions about your healthcare and treatment. Normally, you can accept or refuse any treatment, examinations or tests, and you can decide whether to take part in research.

What does consent mean?

It means agreement. Before a doctor, nurse or any other health professional can examine or treat you, they must have your consent.

Who can give consent?

You can give consent if you can make decisions for yourself

- Being able to make decisions means you can understand what is involved and can think clearly about the advantages and disadvantages of different actions.
- You must be given enough information, and you should be allowed to make up your own mind without pressure from other people.

What if I can’t give consent?

You can give consent only if you can understand the information you are given, make a decision, remember your decision and tell other people your decision. If you can’t do all of these things, it is called “incapacity”.

- If your incapacity is because of intoxication from drugs or alcohol, a health professional may be able to treat you without consent, if this is in your best interests.
- If your incapacity is because of mental disorder such as a learning disability or dementia, someone else may be able to give consent for you.

If you are an adult, someone can give consent for you if:

- You have given them welfare power of attorney with the power to consent to treatment, or
- A court has given them a welfare guardianship order with the power to consent to treatment, or
- A court has given them a welfare intervention order specifically for the treatment, and the treatment is needed only for a short time.

Doctors can also treat you if there is no-one who can give consent on your behalf, and the treatment will benefit you.

You should always be given information in a way that you understand and you should always be given help to communicate.

What happens in an emergency?

- In an emergency – for example, if you’ve been in a road accident and you need urgent treatment to save your life – you may not be well enough to make a decision about your treatment.

- If you can't give your consent and there is not time for anyone else to make a decision for you, doctors can treat you. But they can only treat you without your consent if this is necessary to save your life or stop you suffering more serious harm.

How will I be asked to give my consent?

- A doctor or another health professional may ask you to do something to show your consent. For example, a doctor may ask to examine your foot. If you take off your shoe, it shows you agree to this.
- Usually you will be asked to say whether you agree to the examination or treatment.
- If the examination or treatment is complicated, for example an operation, you may be asked to sign a form showing you agree to it.

What information should I be given?

To help you make a decision, NHS staff involved in your care must give you information about the examination or treatment you are being offered in a way that you understand. You may want to know: -

- Why you are being offered the examination or treatment
- What it will involve
- What the benefits are
- Whether there are any risk or side effects
- How large or small the risks are
- Where there are any alternatives
- What may happen if you don't have the examination or treatment

You have the right to ask questions if you don't understand or you want to know more. If the person who is asking you to give consent can't answer your questions, ask them if they can find out or get someone else who can help.

Can I refuse examination or treatment?

- Normally you can refuse an examination or treatment at any time, even if this means your health may be seriously harmed.
- It is important that you understand what may happen to you if you decide not to have the examination or treatment.
- If another treatment can be used instead, you should be given information about it. But you can't insist on a particular treatment if the NHS staff involved in your care don't think it will help you.
- Remember that you can ask for a second opinion about the treatment you have been offered.

How to find out more

For more information about anything in this leaflet, contact:

- A member of NHS staff involved in your care
- The NHS inform Helpline on **0800 22 44 88**, or
- Your local citizens advice bureau (find your nearest bureau on the internet at www.citizensadvice.org.uk)