

## You have the right to:

- receive information about your rights, be fully informed about any treatment offered to you and to have your questions answered
- a physical examination after being admitted to hospital
- an interview with a psychiatrist
- refuse any treatment you do not want
- leave the hospital at any time
- nominate a nominated person (see 'Nominated Persons' brochure)
- contact people by mail, phone or electronically, and be visited (this right may be restricted in an authorised hospital)
- privacy and confidentiality
- access your medical records (this right may be restricted)
- keep your personal possessions securely while you are in hospital
- make a complaint to your mental health service or the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) (t: 1800 813 583)
- have your case reviewed by the Mental Health Tribunal (t: 08 6553 0060) if you are a long-term voluntary patient in an authorised hospital.

## Further information

The information in this brochure relates to the laws set out in the *Mental Health Act 2014*. Information about the Act is summarised in the following set of brochures:

- Being referred to a psychiatrist for an examination
- Inpatient treatment orders
- Community treatment orders
- Information for voluntary patients
- Receiving treatment for a mental illness
- Information for personal support persons
- Nominated persons: how to make a nomination and what it means.

## Other brochures are available from:

- The Mental Health Tribunal
- The Mental Health Advocacy Service
- The Mental Health Law Centre.

For more information about the *Mental Health Act 2014* and other resources, visit the Mental Health Commission website: [www.mhc.wa.gov.au](http://www.mhc.wa.gov.au) or phone (08) 6553 0600.

This document can be made available in other languages and alternative formats on request.

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## Information for voluntary patients in hospital

This brochure provides you with information about what your rights are and what you can expect if you are getting treatment for a mental illness as a voluntary patient in a hospital.

## Becoming a voluntary patient in hospital

If you have been admitted to hospital as a voluntary patient this is because:

- a psychiatrist believed you would benefit from the treatment and care that you will receive in hospital, and
- you (or someone who can provide consent on your behalf – such as a guardian) agreed to you being admitted.

## What can you expect?

You will be one of a number of patients on the ward and staff will explain the rules and routines around living on the ward. While in hospital you will see a psychiatrist and other staff such as psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists and nurses. You will have a thorough physical and psychiatric assessment to work out what is the best treatment and care for your mental illness.

## What treatment can you get?

Treatment may include medication as well as occupational therapy, individual or group counselling, psychological programs and electroconvulsive therapy.

Being a voluntary patient means that no treatment can be provided to you without informed consent from yourself (or someone who can provide consent on your behalf – such as a guardian).

In order to be able to give informed consent you must be able to:

- understand information about your treatment, explanations about alternative treatments and warnings of any risks,
- understand the matters involved in your treatment decision,
- understand the effect of your treatment decision,
- weigh up the factors involved in your decision, and
- communicate your decision.

You must also be given sufficient time to consider this information, ask questions and request further information or advice.

If you refuse treatment and the staff feel the treatment is necessary to save your life or prevent you from causing physical harm to yourself or others, then the treatment may be given without consent. This is called emergency psychiatric treatment.

## Discharge and leaving the hospital

As a voluntary patient you can leave the hospital whenever you wish, or your psychiatrist can discharge you. If you are thinking about discharging yourself it is important that you first discuss it with your psychiatrist and other staff members.

## Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)

If you want to leave the hospital against medical advice and a doctor or an authorised mental health practitioner (a highly qualified mental health practitioner) thinks that you may need an involuntary treatment order, he or she may refer you for an examination by a psychiatrist on a Form 1A referral.

If you are in an authorised hospital (a hospital that also admits involuntary patients), then you can be stopped from leaving for up to 6 hours so that the doctor/practitioner can see you and decide whether or not to refer you to a psychiatrist.

At the examination, the psychiatrist will consider the following criteria, to decide whether or not you need involuntary treatment:

- Do you have a mental illness that requires treatment?
- Is there a significant risk to yourself or another person if you do not get treatment?
- Are you well enough to be able to make a decision about treatment?
- Is there a less restrictive way of providing you with treatment other than involuntary treatment?

If you do not meet the criteria for needing to be an involuntary patient, you will be allowed to leave.