

Making Decisions - Your Health



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF VOLUNTARY BODIES

Providing Services to People with Intellectual Disability

**CENTRE for DISABILITY
LAW & POLICY**





A health or medical decision is a decision you make about what to do:

- when you are not feeling well
- when you have are worried about your health
- when you go for regular check -ups to your doctor or dentist
- when you are in hospital
- when you need treatment or surgery

This is also called making a decision about your health.

The law says that adults have capacity. This means being able to make your own decision about something.

The law says having capacity means that:

- you are able to understand the information about the decision so that you can decide
 - If you do not understand the information you are being given, you should ask for a clearer explanation
 - You should continue to ask until you understand
 - You should ask as many questions as you need to
- you remember the information
- you are able to understand the different choices you have so that you can make a decision
- you are able to understand what will happen when you make your decision
- you can tell or show someone what you want.

You can tell or show someone by:

- Using words
 - Using pictures
 - Using signs like Lámh or Irish Sign Language
 - Using your communication device
 - Using gestures
 - Using any of these together
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You should be given the chance to make choices and decisions for yourself.

The people around you, people you trust or family, should support and help you to make whatever decisions you want.

At first, these can be smaller decisions like taking vitamins or taking a tablet for a headache.

You can make many different decisions about

- Yourself
- Your health
- Your visit to the doctor
- Your visit to the dentist
- Your treatment





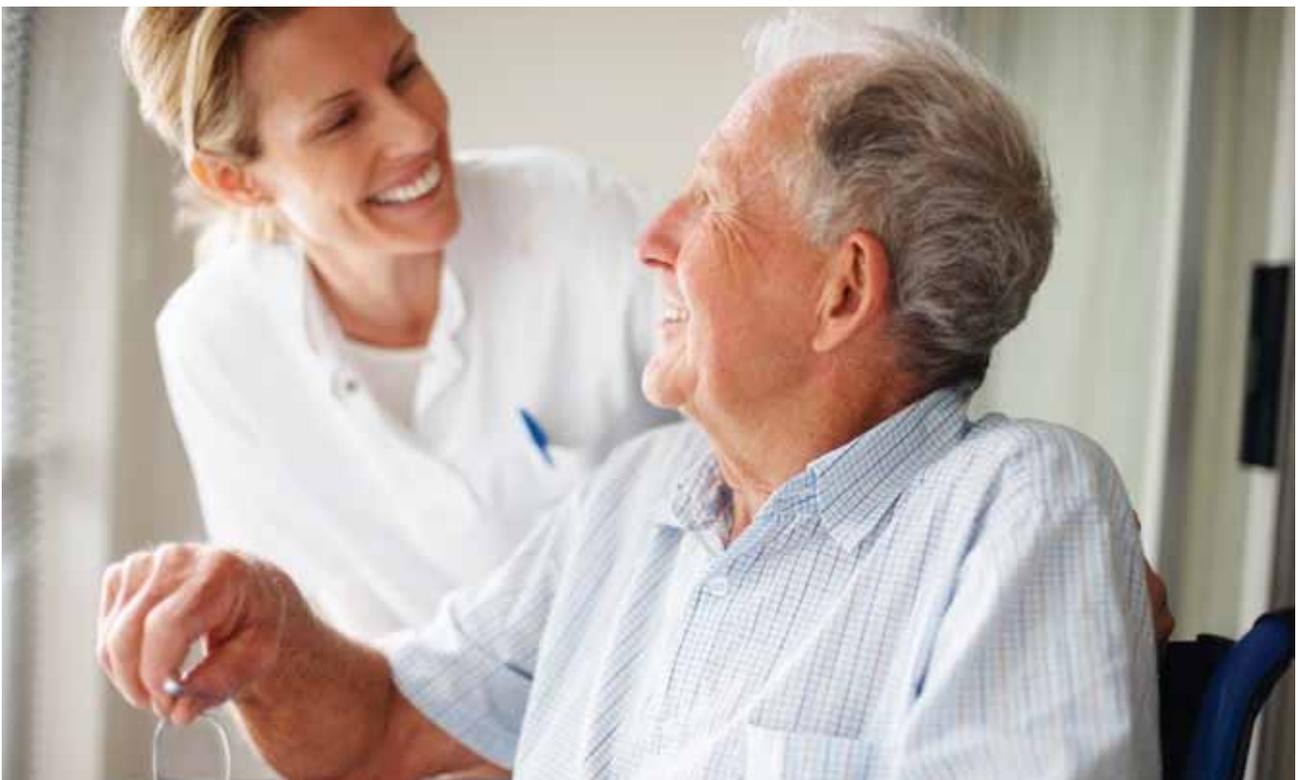
INFORMATION

You need information about something before you can make a decision about it. You might need information about yourself, your health, your treatment, before you can make a decision about it.

You should be given information and the information should be explained to you in a way that you can understand it.

You might need more information if it is a difficult decision. Information can be explained to you

- Using words
- Using pictures
- Using signs like Lámh or Irish Sign Language
- Using your communication device
- Using any of these together





GETTING SUPPORT TO MAKE DECISIONS:

What you would like

You should have enough support to make your own decisions.

Sometimes it may be difficult for you to make decisions about your health.

Then, someone you trust can help you to make that decision. They can support you to:

- Understand the information about your decision
- Remember the information that you need to make your decision
- Understand the different choices you have
- Know what happens after you have made your decision
- Let people know what your decision is

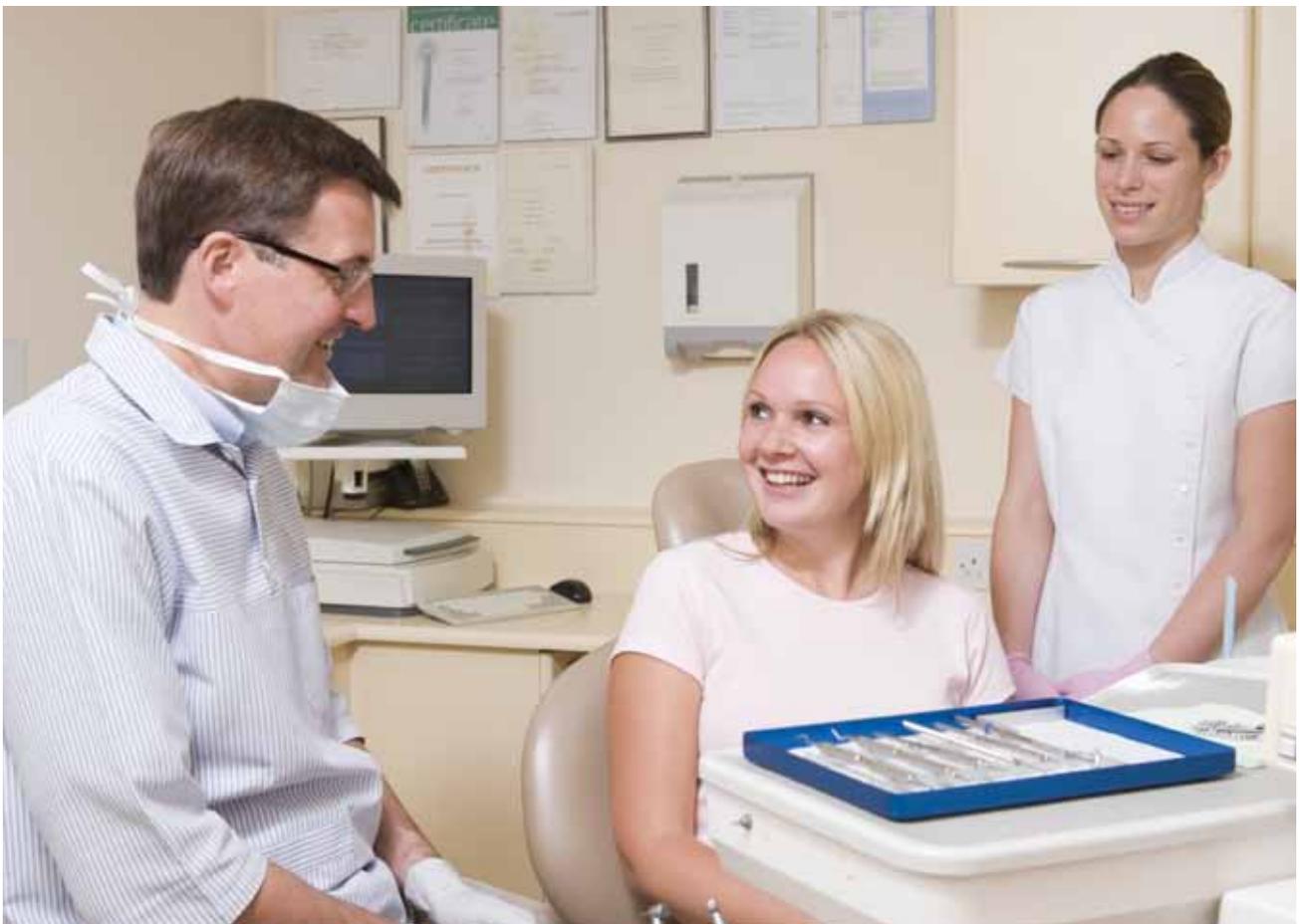
When someone you trust supports you to make a decision, they have to remember that it is your views that are very important.

Someone you trust can include a friend, an advocate, a family member and any other person who supports and knows you well.

Sometimes a court may decide that you are unable to make a decision about your health or medical treatment. In this case, someone may be asked to make a decision for you. This decision must be based on your wishes, what is happening now and what might happen so that things are better for you.

MAKING DECISIONS : It's your health

Stepping Stones to making decisions about your health:



THIS IS ANN ...



Ann has a headache and cannot sleep well at night.

Ann wants to go to the hospital to talk to a doctor.

Ann tells her dad that she wants to go to the hospital to see a doctor.

Ann's dad suggests that he brings her to the local doctor instead of a hospital.

Ann agrees because her dad explains that the local doctor can see her too and she doesn't need to go to the hospital.

The doctor sees Ann and asks her if she would like to take medicine to make her headache better.

The doctor explains to Ann that if she takes the medicine she will feel better and if she doesn't take the medicine she will still have a headache.

The doctor offers Ann tablets but Ann explains that she doesn't like taking tablets because she finds them hard to swallow.

The doctor offers Ann medicine from a bottle that she can take with a spoon instead.

Ann decides that she would like to take the medicine from the bottle.

Ann is happy that she agreed to take the medicine.

She is also happy she decided to tell the doctor she doesn't like tablets.

She is happy she made the decision to tell her dad she needed to see the doctor.

Ann made a legal decision-she made a choice and consented/agreed to her treatment. She chose not to have tablets and said she wanted medicine from the bottle. She was given the right information and she was able to understand it and explain what she wanted.