You are entitled to expect and receive high quality services in public hospitals

patientcharter.health.vic.gov.au
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This charter promotes a partnership between you and health service staff. By working with your treating team of health professionals you can get the best results for your health. Your treating team includes doctors, nurses and allied health staff who look after you during your hospital stay. The hospital has a Patient Representative who you may like to contact if you have a concern, problem or query about your hospital stay.

This pamphlet provides information about what you can expect in public hospitals and can be read in conjunction with other related hospital and patient rights information.

The following are your rights and responsibilities in public hospitals.
You have the right to:

**A wide range of public hospital services.**
Victoria’s public hospitals provide a wide range of services to Australian residents and the most appropriate service will be provided to you. Sometimes that can mean a transfer or referral to a different hospital or health care setting, such as rehabilitation or a community health care centre. Having a wide range of services means that wherever you are in the State, you will have access to high quality and appropriate care.

**Treatment based on clinical need regardless of your ability to pay or your health insurance status.**
You have the right to be treated, as your medical condition requires, irrespective of how much money you have or whether you have private health insurance.

**Choose whether you wish to have treatment as a public or a private patient.**
You may choose to be a public or private patient. If you are a public patient, you will not be charged for your hospital or medical services. If you are a private patient, you or your health insurer will be charged for some services. You may want to discuss with your hospital, health fund or doctor what other services you may be charged for as either a public or private patient. Your ability to choose your treating doctor will differ depending on whether you are a private or public hospital patient.
Treatment and care in a safe environment.
You have the right to feel safe, clean and comfortable while in hospital. You have the right to raise any concerns with hospital staff, and to request assistance from the Patient Representative at the hospital.

Participate in making decisions about your treatment and care.
You should be fully involved in decisions about your care and be given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss treatments so you understand what is happening. If you are a patient capable of giving informed consent you also have the right to refuse treatment. You may also appoint someone to make medical decisions for you in the event you lose capacity to do so. For more information please contact the Office of the Public Advocate.

Participate in decisions and receive information about your discharge from hospital.
You should be fully involved in deciding how and when you leave hospital. Before you are discharged, decisions will need to be made about your ongoing needs. You have the right to participate in these decisions and to receive information about available services. Your referring general practitioner should also be involved in this process. You may discharge yourself against your doctor’s advice, however, you may be asked to sign a form accepting responsibility for your decision.
Information about which hospital staff will provide your care.
In hospital you will be seen by a number of people. You have the right to be kept informed about who is responsible for your care and how to contact them.

Information about your health care and, if you wish, a second medical opinion.
You are entitled to be fully informed about your treatment. You should be given enough time to ask questions, get more information and talk to family and friends before making any decisions. If you are unsure about your treatment, you are entitled to obtain a second opinion from another qualified health professional.

Access to your health records and confidentiality for your personal information.
During your stay in hospital, after you have been discharged, or following any treatment, you may want to see your health record. It may be possible to arrange direct informal access to some or all of your record through your doctor or the Hospital’s Privacy Officer. You can also apply through Freedom of Information (FOI) to see and receive copies of your records. The hospital’s FOI Officer or Privacy Officer can advise you on making an FOI request. This is a more formal process and you may wish to contact the Patient Representative for assistance.

Everyone involved in your treatment and care has a professional and legal duty to keep
information about you confidential. Information about you is only passed on to another person, not involved in your care, if authorised by you or by law. Anyone who receives information from a hospital about you is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential. The Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) sets out privacy principles with which all health services must comply.

Treatment with respect, dignity and consideration for privacy.

As far as possible, health services will provide care and treatment in surroundings that allow privacy. You should be treated in a manner that respects your individuality. You are also expected to treat the hospital staff with respect and consideration.

If necessary, to have access to an accredited interpreter.

You are entitled to use an interpreting service for essential information such as admission, and discussions about your medical history and treatment. If you need an interpreter during your stay, please inform your doctor or nurse as soon as you can. The interpreter may come in person or be accessed via the phone.

Services provided in a culturally sensitive way.

You have the right to be treated in a way that respects your culture and beliefs; for example, this may relate to the gender of the person treating you or dietary requirements. Where possible, the hospital will make every effort to meet your needs. If you have any concerns, you should speak to one of the staff or the Patient Representative.
Information on steps the hospital takes to improve the quality of care.

Hospitals are always trying to improve their quality of care. Sometimes patients or family members can see ways that services can be improved. If you have ideas about how services could be improved please let the staff know.

Most professions require their members to meet recognised standards. Hospitals are no different. Hospitals are required to produce an annual quality of care report to the community that details how the hospital is improving its quality of care. You have a right to this information.

An opportunity to discuss any questions or complaints you may have concerning your stay in hospital.

If you have a question or a complaint, speak to your treating team. Hospital staff want to solve problems quickly, but they need to be told about the problem first. All public hospitals in Victoria have Patient Representatives. If your problem cannot be resolved by talking to your treating team, you should speak to the Patient Representative.

Make a complaint to an independent complaints organisation.

It is always best to try to resolve your complaint with the hospital. If you have tried this and are still unsatisfied, you can make a complaint to the Health Services Commissioner. The Commissioner can assist in the resolution of your complaint.
Your Responsibilities

You have the responsibility to:

Work with your treating team by providing relevant information about your health and circumstances that may influence your treatment, recovery or stay in hospital.

Many things affect your health, such as your medical history, general health, social circumstances and emotional well-being. Your treating team can only provide the most appropriate care if they know all the relevant information about your health and circumstances. You have a responsibility to give your treating team all relevant information when asked about your health. For the best possible health outcome, both you and your treating team need to share information openly.
More information on the Public Hospital Patient Charter is available at:
patientcharter.health.vic.gov.au

Your hospital will have a Patient Representative. Ask the hospital staff or at the information desk.

More information about the rights of mental health patients, patients in private hospitals, health insurance and legislation relating to patient rights can be found through the web sites and contacts below.

Some hospitals have Aboriginal Liaison Officers. Ask the hospital staff or at the information desk.

Information about Mental Health Patient Rights is available in pamphlet form or on the Internet at:
Health Services Commissioner
30th Floor, 570 Bourke Street,
Melbourne 3000
Phone 8601 5200
Freecall 1800 136 066
Fax 8601 5219

The Office of the Public Advocate
Level 5, 436 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne 3000
Phone 9603 9500
Freecall 1800 136 829
Website www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
