

Consent: giving permission for your child to have treatment: information for families

Consent in healthcare means the process of agreeing or giving permission to have treatment. There are various ways you can give your consent and different circumstances in which we will ask for your consent. Please remember that we want you to have all the information you need to decide and feel you have made the right decision.

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) explains about consent and how we go about asking for agreement to treatment. An Easy Read information sheet is also included for your child.

Wherever possible, part of the consent process should involve a joint discussion between you, the healthcare professional and your child. Consent should be given voluntarily – no one should pressure you into giving permission.

Consent should be informed – that is, you should have all the information you need to make a balanced decision, including the risks, benefits and any alternatives (including doing nothing) to the proposed treatment.

Who will ask me to give consent?

We cannot guarantee that the person carrying out the treatment will be the one to ask your permission, but they should be suitably trained and qualified, have sufficient knowledge of the treatment and understand the risks, benefits and any alternatives. In many cases, a doctor will ask you for consent but some of our senior nurses are able to ask for consent as well.

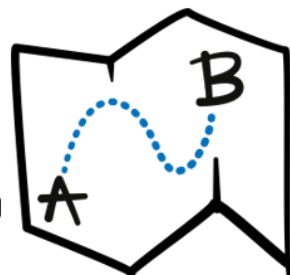
How can I give my consent?

You could give consent in the following ways:

- **Non-verbal** – for instance, by holding out your child's arm so a doctor can take their blood pressure, you are giving your consent in a non-verbal way.
- **Verbal** – by saying that you give permission for your child to have treatment.
- **Written** – by signing a consent form giving permission for your child to have treatment.

When will I be asked to give consent?

We will ask you to give permission by signing a consent form when the treatment proposed is complex, has significant risks or may involve the need for a blood transfusion. In addition, we will ask for written consent for all procedures given with a general anaesthetic.



Sometimes, we ask for your consent at an outpatient or pre-admission assessment appointment some time before the procedure is scheduled. In this case, we will always check that you are happy to continue on the day of admission.

In an emergency, where treatment is needed to prevent death or serious harm, we may try to take consent by telephone. This is one reason why it is so important to check that we have your current contact details. If this is not possible, we will continue to carry out treatment without asking for consent if it is in the best interests of your child.

Who can give consent?

This depends on your child's age and whether they are competent or have capacity to make the decision whether to have treatment.

Children under 16 years old can give consent for themselves if they are judged to be capable of making the decision.

If your child under 16 years is judged competent and refuses treatment, this can be overruled by a person with Parental Responsibility, if the doctors think that is in their best interests. However, if your child under 16 is judged competent and agrees to treatment, this cannot be overruled by someone with Parental Responsibility.

If your child under 16 years is judged incapable of making the decision, either due to their age, their emotional maturity or learning disabilities, then a person with Parental Responsibility can give their permission. Parental Responsibility refers to the individual who has legal rights, responsibilities, duties, power and authority to make decisions for a child.

For **young people aged 16 years or older**, their ability to consent for themselves is judged by the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Further information is available online at www.justice.gov.uk/protecting-thevulnerable/mental-capacity-act.

If your child is aged 16 or 17 years old, the law states that they must be the person who is asked to give consent unless they are not able to make the decision. You can only give consent on behalf of your 16 or 17 year old child if they are legally unable to consent for themselves.

Parents cannot give consent for **young people aged 18 years or over**, even if they cannot consent for themselves. The only exception to this is if you have applied successfully for an Order from the Court of Protection.

If the adult patient lacks capacity and you don't have an Order from the Court of Protection, the proposed treatment will be discussed with you, but the treating team will make the final decision in the best interests of the young person.

What if we cannot agree?

Ideally, we want everyone involved to agree a decision that is in the best interests of the child or young person. However, there will be circumstances where agreement is difficult, so additional people may be called in to provide a second opinion or act as an unbiased mediator. There is a specialist Court service that parents and the hospital can go to together if ultimately a decision cannot be agreed. We will support you through this process. We only approach the Court as a last resort.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any point after giving consent. If you do change your mind, we may ask you to record this on the consent form. Changing your mind will not affect any care your child is given now or at any point in the future.



Our commitment to you

At GOSH, we want you to be sure about any decisions you make on behalf of your child. We promise that we will always try to:

- Take you somewhere quiet
- Make sure you have enough time – ask for more time if you need it
- Give you as much information as you need – ask us to explain again if you do not understand
- Make sure that the right person asks your permission

Further information and support

If you have any questions, please ask the healthcare professional asking for your consent. You can also contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (Pals) office if you have any questions. Visit their office inside the main reception area, telephone them on 020 7829 7862 or email them at pals@gosh.nhs.uk

Giving consent



You are coming to hospital to see a doctor or nurse. They may need to do something to make you feel better. This could be doing some tests or having an operation.



The doctors and nurses will tell you what they plan to do. They will ask if you agree. This is called 'giving consent'.



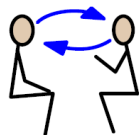
Giving consent means you can say 'yes' or 'no' to their plan. We want you to be happy you have made the right choice.



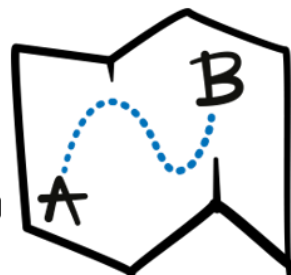
Before you make any decisions, someone will check that you understand what is involved and what choices you have. You might find it easy to decide some things but others can be more difficult.



Before you decide, they will tell you what they plan to do and why. They may give you a leaflet as well.



You can talk to someone about what the doctors and nurses have said. They can ask questions too.





You should be sure you understand before you decide to give consent or not.



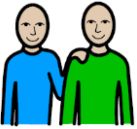
The doctors and nurses may ask you to tell them what you have decided.



They may ask you to sign a form that shows your decision. This is called a consent form.



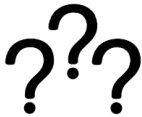
We might ask you to sign the form on a tablet rather than on paper.



Sometimes the grown up who looks after you may sign the form instead. They should still ask you what you think before they sign.



You can change your mind at any time. Even if you have already said yes or signed a form.



Please ask us if you have any questions.

