

# Going to Hospital

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This guide is designed to help you prepare for your hospital stay.



## Acknowledgements

The Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT (HCCA) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land our organisation is located on and where we work. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We pay our respects to their ancestors and elders, past, present and emerging.

HCCA thanks all those who contributed to this adaptation of the Western Australian Department of Health *Patient First* resources for use as the *Staying Safe* resources in the Australian Capital Territory.

## About HCCA

The **Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA)** is a health promotion agency and the peak consumer advocacy organisation in the Canberra region. HCCA provides a voice for consumers on local health issues and provides opportunities for health care consumers to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA involves consumers through:

- consumer representation and consumer and community consultations
- training in health rights and navigating the health system
- health literacy education and resources
- community forums and information sessions about health services
- research into consumer experience of human services.

For more information contact HCCA at [www.hcca.org.au](http://www.hcca.org.au), on 02 6230 7800, or by email at [adminofficer@hcca.org.au](mailto:adminofficer@hcca.org.au)

Disclaimer: This publication is provided for information purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not imply endorsement and is not intended to replace advice from your health care professional. All users should seek advice from a qualified health care professional for advice relevant to their unique circumstances.



# Going to Hospital

**This guide is designed to help you prepare for your hospital stay.**

## 1. Your rights and responsibilities

You have the right to health care that is:

**Respectful**

**Responsive**

**Safe**

**High  
Quality**

**Tailored to  
YOUR  
needs**

**Healthcare staff have a responsibility to:**

- treat you respectfully
- listen to your concerns
- answer your questions clearly and honestly
- inform and educate you about your condition and your symptoms.

You have a responsibility to treat the hospital staff and other patients with respect.

## 2. Sharing information

Sharing information about your health will help staff give you the best care possible.

Respect and good communication between staff, patients and carers will help you have a positive hospital experience and a better health outcome

### **You will be asked about:**

- you and your family's medical history
- any medicines you are taking
- any bad reactions you may have had to a medicine or any other allergies
- any recent changes to your health
- your dietary needs
- your religious, cultural or language needs
- any help you need to communicate or move around.

## 3. Talking with staff

Tell the staff if you can't understand the information they give you.

### **Let them know if you need:**



an interpreter or written information in another language



the National Relay Service if you have a hearing or speech condition



information in another format, like a diagram, a picture, or a document in simpler English



support from a social worker or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer.





# 4. Informed consent

Your treatment is your choice.

Before you say yes or no, make sure you know about your treatment options. This will help you make the right decision for you.

**Remember, speak up if you don't understand.**

**You can only make an informed decision if you understand:**

- your condition
- what treatments can help you
- the benefits and risks of the treatment, medicines, or operation.

**Medical staff WANT you to ask questions. They are there to give you information and answer any questions you have.**

**Ask your doctor or other health professional these questions to help you decide:**

- Do I really need this test or procedure?
- What are the risks?
- Are there simpler, safer options?
- What happens if I don't do anything?
- What are the costs?

**The questions were developed by Choosing Wisely Australia. You can find more information at: [www.choosingwisely.org.au](http://www.choosingwisely.org.au)**

**Your doctor can give you advice about treatment options, but only you know your:**

- lifestyle
- work and family demands
- personal needs.

If you are not sure, discuss your options with a friend or family member. You also have the right to ask for a second opinion from another doctor or specialist.

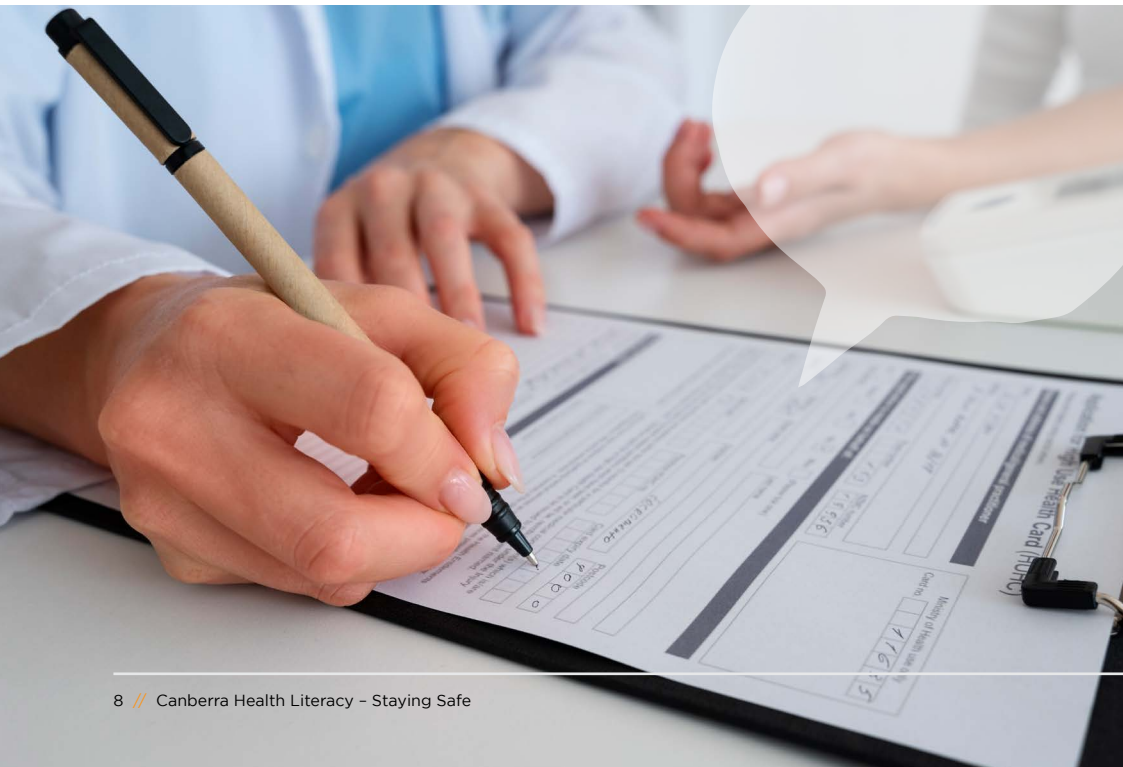
**The final decision is yours.** When you are happy that you understand and agree to what is going to happen you can give your consent (your “yes”). You may be asked to sign a consent form.

## 5. Advance Care Planning

You can appoint someone you trust to speak on your behalf if you are not well enough to do so in the future. You can also record your decisions about what kind of care you want, so your loved ones and staff know.

This is called Advance Care Planning (ACP). The ACT ACP team can help you have a discussion about what you want and complete the forms. This service is available to all ACT residents. Contact the Advance Care Planning team on 02 5124 9274 or email [acp@act.gov.au](mailto:acp@act.gov.au).

It is a good idea to share these documents with chosen family members or friends who will be involved in making decisions if you lose legal decision making. You can also share a copy of your ACP with any hospital or health service and ask them to keep this on the health record they hold about you. You can upload them to your My Health Record if you have one. My Health Record is the national personal electronic health record system. You can also add your ACP to the ACT Digital Health Record. The ACP team can give you advice about how to do this if you are unsure.



## 6. Family and carer involvement

Family members or friends who provide you with ongoing support may be referred to as your carer.

Your carer knows you well and they may notice things that are important to tell staff. They may not be able to make decisions for you unless you have said they can in your Advance Care Plan – next of kin have some informal decision-making capacity, and people can ask for their carers to be involved.

**There is help available to support your carer when you are in hospital. Contact Carers ACT on 02 6296 9900 or [carers@carersact.org.au](mailto:carers@carersact.org.au).**

## 7. Before your admission

Before being admitted to hospital, you may be asked to attend a pre-admission clinic or provide information by telephone or online.

### **You will be asked to:**

- confirm your personal details and any specific needs you may have
- give information about your medical history, including if you have recently been unwell or your symptoms have changed
- do any tests that will help the doctors to treat you

If you attend a pre-admission clinic in person, the staff will tell you if there is anything you need to do before you are admitted, for example if you need to fast or stop a medication. This is a good time to ask questions and find out more about what will happen during your hospital stay.

If you are doing the pre-admission forms online, you can ring your doctor's rooms for information about your treatment and anything you may need to do to prepare.



## 8. Training and research

Sometimes trainees or research staff may be involved in your care. This is important to build and improve the health system.

There could be trainee nurses, doctors, physiotherapists, dietitians, or other trainee allied health staff caring for you. Staff will explain who they are and ask if it is OK for them to be involved in your care. Students will be supervised by experienced qualified staff.

You could also be asked to take part in clinical trials or medical research into new treatments or types of care.

You can refuse to take part in the training of health care staff or in clinical trials or medical research.

## 9. What to bring and prepare

When you go to hospital, make sure you take:

- Any x-rays, scans, test results or information that are relevant to your stay
- Your Medicare card and health care or DVA card
- Your private health insurance details
- Completed admission forms
- Things you use every day – for example your glasses, dentures, hearing aids and a mobile phone charger
- Your regular medicines in their original containers – including over-the-counter medicines, inhalers and eye drops
- Any mobility aids you use – for example your wheelchair, walking stick or walking frame. Make sure they are clearly and securely labelled with your name and contact phone number. You can also ask the staff to put one of your patient identifier stickers on it.
- Any medical equipment you need – for example your CPAP machine or blood glucose monitor. If you are unsure if you will need it or if the hospital will have one for you to use, it is important to check before you go.
- Footwear/slippers
- Sleepwear, dressing gown and toiletries for overnight stays
- Sanitary supplies (especially if you are a maternity or gynaecology patient)
- Foam earplugs - hospitals can be noisy at night. If you forget, ask the staff for some if you are having trouble sleeping.
- A warm, comfortable jacket that opens in the front and is easy to get on and off
- Books, magazines, or other items for entertainment.

**Don't bring jewellery, valuables or large amounts of cash with you.**



## 10. Other preparations

Check with the hospital for any specific items you need to bring if you are a maternity patient.



**If you are in a caring role at home, plan for someone to do that role while you are in hospital.** Ask if they can keep helping in that role when you first return home.



**If you have a person that cares for you at home, have them come with you to your hospital admission.** Keep them up to date about your care and treatment in hospital. Hospital staff should involve them in decisions about your care and treatment, if you want them to be.



**If you are a smoker, consider giving up or work out how you will manage not smoking before your hospital stay.** There is a no smoking policy in all hospitals and hospital grounds. You could ask your GP about nicotine patches or gum, including whether they are safe for you to use. You can also get help and advice from Quitline on 13 78 48 or at [icanquit.com.au](http://icanquit.com.au)



**If your home is going to be empty while you are in hospital, you can make it more secure:**

- Have someone empty your mailbox or have your mail redirected
- Cancel newspaper deliveries
- Organise a lawn mowing service
- Set a timer to turn lights on and off automatically in the evening.



**Let your neighbours know how long you expect to be in hospital so they can keep an eye on your home.**



**It can also help to organise some easy, healthy meal options for when you get home, such as:**

- freezing meals, milk and bread
- stocking up on non-perishable items in advance
- working out how to have groceries delivered.



**Do you need to organise for someone to look after your pets, garden, or houseplants?** It can help to have any arrangements continue for a while after you get home in case you need time to get back to your normal routines.

## 11. Preparing for coming home

If you think you will need extra help when you get home, it is important to try to organise this **before** you go to hospital. You may have to wait for services to be organised.

You can contact the Seniors Information Service provided by COTA ACT on 02 6282 3777 for information about services.

If you are under 65 you may be able to get help through the ACT Government's Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP). You can find out more about CASP at: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/services-and-programs/act-community-assistance-support-program-casp>

## 12. Getting there

Think about how you will get to and from the hospital.

**If possible:**



do not drive yourself



consider booking a taxi,  
or getting a lift with a  
friend or relative



get to know the hospital's  
parking areas and closest  
set down and pick up  
points.

## 13. Patient travel

If you need to travel outside the ACT for medical treatment, you may be able to get help with travel costs from the ACT Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (IPTAS).

IPTAS can cover some travel and accommodation costs for permanent residents of the ACT who have to travel interstate for specialist medical treatment that is not available in the ACT. Find out if you can access the ACT IPTAS on the ACT Health website at: [www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au).

If you receive a DVA pension or benefit, you may be able to get financial assistance under the Repatriation Transport Scheme. You should check this with DVA before applying for the ACT IPTAS. If you receive financial help from DVA you cannot receive help from the ACT IPTAS for the same costs. You can contact the IPTAS team on 02 5124 9082 or by email at [IPTAS@act.gov.au](mailto:IPTAS@act.gov.au).

# 14. Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the ACT and regional NSW can contact an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer for emotional, social and cultural support, and information.

At the Canberra Hospital, University of Canberra Hospital and Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, phone 02 5124 2055 or email [ALOService@act.gov.au](mailto:ALOService@act.gov.au).

At North Canberra Hospital phone 02 6264 7097 or 02 6201 6283.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers are available Monday to Friday during business hours. You can also ask the staff in hospital to arrange for them to visit you.





# MEDICAL REPORT

## 15. Your health record and privacy

Your health record tells the story of your health care. Every time you visit a doctor or hospital, a record of your visit is created. These records can be accessed quickly in an emergency and by other doctors and hospitals if needed.

The record keeps track of any illnesses and conditions you may have, and any treatments and care you have received. Your medical records must be kept confidential.

### You have a right to:

- know what has been written in your record
- request access to the information
- request that mistakes in the record are noted as mistakes.

If the record is held by ACT Health you can request access to it by submitting a **Patient request to access Health Records** form. The form can be found online at [www.health.act.gov.au/](http://www.health.act.gov.au/)

If a record is created by a private health service or practitioner, such as a GP or a dentist, you will need to contact them.

In very rare circumstances a health service can refuse your request to access your health record, but they must explain why. If you have difficulty accessing your health record you can contact the ACT Health Services Commissioner on 02 6205 2222.

Your health information may also be held digitally in your **My Health Record**. Not all doctors or health services record information on **My Health Record**. To see what is held in your **My Health Record** you need to go to the **My Health Record** website: [www.myhealthrecord.gov.au/](http://www.myhealthrecord.gov.au/)

# 16. When you are in hospital

You can find tips and ideas about how to stay safe while you are in hospital and when you go home in the other booklets in the Staying Safe series:



**Staying Safe  
– In Hospital**



**Staying Safe  
– Now you are home**

You can find them on the Health Care Consumers' Association website or contact us for a printed version. Phone us on 02 6230 7800 or email [adminofficer@hcca.org.au](mailto:adminofficer@hcca.org.au).

# 17. More Information

You can find more information about going to hospital and important information for in-patients on the hospital's website.

If you are attending as a day patient, you should receive admission information from the hospital. You can ring the hospital and ask to speak to the Admissions team if you need more information.

# 18. Hospital Contact Details

Here are contact details and links to the website for most hospitals in Canberra. Each hospital has information for patients, which you can find on their website.

## **Canberra Hospital**

Phone: (02) 5124 0000

Website: <https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/before,-during-and-after-your-care/staying-at-canberra-hospital>

## **North Canberra Hospital**

Phone: (02) 6201 6111

Website: <https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/before,-during-and-after-your-care/staying-at-north-canberra-hospital>

## **Centenary Hospital for Women and Children**

Phone: (02) 5124 0000

Website: <https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/locations-and-directions/centenary-hospital-for-women-and-children>

## **University of Canberra Hospital**

Phone: (02) 5124 0000

Website: <https://www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/before,-during-and-after-your-care/staying-at-university-of-canberra-hospital>

## **National Capital Private Hospital**

Phone: (02) 6222 6666

Website: <https://nationalcapitalprivatehospital.com.au/>

## **Calvary Bruce Private Hospital**

Phone: (02) 6245 3100

Website: <https://www.calvarycare.org.au/bruce-private-hospital/>

## **John James Private Hospital (Calvary)**

Phone: (02) 6281 8100

Website: <https://www.calvarycare.org.au/john-james-private-hospital-canberra/>

# 19. Key Contacts

## **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison team:**

- At Canberra Hospital, University of Canberra Hospital and Centenary Hospital for Women and Children phone 02 5124 2055 or email [ALOService@act.gov.au](mailto:ALOService@act.gov.au).
- At North Canberra Hospital phone 02 6264 7097 or 02 6201 6283.

## **ACT Advance Care Planning team**

The ACT Advance Care Planning team can be contacted by phone on 02 5124 9274 or email at [acp@act.gov.au](mailto:acp@act.gov.au)

## **Carers ACT**

Carers ACT can be contact by phone on 02 6296 9900 or email at [carers@carersact.org.au](mailto:carers@carersact.org.au)

## **Seniors Information Service provided by COTA ACT**

The Seniors Information Service provided by COTA ACT can be contact by phone on 02 6282 3777 or by email at: [contact@cotaact.org.au](mailto:contact@cotaact.org.au)

## **ACT Government Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP)**

Information about eligibility and how to access the ACT Government Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP) scheme can be found at: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/services-and-programs/act-community-assistance-support-program-casp>

## **ACT Health Services Commissioner**

The ACT Health Services Commissioner can be contacted by phone on 02 6205 2222.

## **ACT Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme**

The team at the ACT Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme can be contacted by phone on 02 5124 9082 or by email at [IPTAS@act.gov.au](mailto:IPTAS@act.gov.au).

### **Publication date:**

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Adaptations made by HCCA have been guided by the input of health care consumers in the ACT and include information specific to the ACT health system.

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