

## Making decisions around tests or procedures during pregnancy

### **This leaflet is to provide information for those who have been asked to provide consent for a test or procedure.**

During pregnancy, labour and birth a midwife or doctor talk to you to help you choose whether or not to have certain tests or procedures performed.

The conversation will allow time for a discussion about:

- the purpose, risks and benefits of the test or procedure.
- the risks and benefits of alternative options, including not doing the test or procedure

You will have the chance to ask further questions and weigh up the advantages and drawbacks. This process is called 'giving informed consent'. Please remember that having given consent, you can change your mind later about having certain tests or procedures.

The time open to you to consider these options may be variable. For example, in a routine antenatal appointment you could be given the option to take the time to discuss this with a partner and reach a decision at a later stage. There may also be circumstances where you are required to decide upon whether to accept a procedure in a more urgent timeframe. For example, during an emergency, whilst options will still be discussed, there may be a need to make a rapid decision.

Some procedures, such as Caesarean birth, do require your signature on a consent form after discussion of all options and risks/benefits associated with each option.

Following a landmark legal case in 2015 (Montgomery vs Lanarkshire Health Board), healthcare professionals are obliged to give you information which:

- clearly outlines the potential treatment options, ensuring you are aware of both advantages and possible complications for each option
- discusses the consequences of not performing any treatment or intervention
- ensures you have access to high-quality information to aid decision-making; this might include an information sheet or video clip link

and need to:

- give you adequate time to reflect before making a decision
- check you have fully understood your options and the implications
- document the above process in the maternity record
- document any changes of mind about the treatment / test in the maternity record

Relatives cannot sign on your behalf or stop you from having a test or procedure if you choose to have it. Relatives cannot make you have a test or procedure if you decline. Midwives and doctors cannot make you have a test or procedure if you decline, even if they do not agree with your decision.

Information sheets on various procedures are available on request.

Additional information can be read by following these links:

- <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/members/membership-news/og-magazine/december-2016/montgomery.pdf>
- <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/consent/>
- <https://www.birthrights.org.uk/factsheets/consenting-to-treatment/>

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

### **How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?**

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

**If you need advice or further assistance, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS): call 01296 316042 or email [bht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:bht.pals@nhs.net)**

#### *Approvals:*

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*Clinical Guidelines Subgroup: not required*

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*Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services*