

## Confidentiality (health privacy) for teens & young adults

### Tūmataiti (matatapu ā-hauora) mō ngā taiohi me ngā rangatahi

This information is especially for rangatahi (young people) aged from 12 to 24 years.

Health privacy or confidentiality is your right to have your personal, identifiable and medical information kept private. This includes anything you say, details about your treatment and written information about you.

By law, all health providers have to keep your health information confidential. A health provider is

anyone who looks after your health. This includes doctors, nurses and pharmacists. They are not allowed to discuss your appointments with your parents, whānau (family) or friends. This is true even if your whānau goes to the same general practice or clinic or sees the same doctor. Nobody at the clinic can even mention that you have been to see them.

Government departments can ask if you have been to see your general practice team. For example, the police, Department of Corrections and Oranga Tamariki. Your general practice team has to get your permission before telling them. And they only have to say if you have attended or not. They do not have to give any details about why you visited or what you discussed.

### Why confidentiality is important

It is important that you can talk to a health provider about anything and feel secure that your care and information is kept private. This may include personal things such as relationships, how you are feeling, drugs and alcohol. It may also include sex (including contraception) and pregnancy. The health provider may suggest you talk to your parents or someone you trust. But they are not normally allowed to tell your parents or anyone unless you agree.

The **only** time a health provider is allowed to share your information is to protect you. The law says they must look after your interests. This includes if they are concerned that you are at risk of hurting yourself or committing suicide or being harmed by someone else. Under these circumstances, the health provider would decide if anyone else needed to be involved, and if so, whom. They should talk to you first and let you know who they are going to talk to and why. Sometimes, in certain serious situations, they can share information without you agreeing. For example, if you had an infectious disease that put others at risk.





## Age of consent

Once you turn 16, you can make an informed choice and give informed consent to all your own medical and dental care. This means you can choose to have or not have any medical treatment. Informed consent means you fully understand what the treatment involves and agree with it. You can find out more about informed choice, giving informed consent and your rights as a health consumer from the Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services). To access this information, go to [www.hdc.org.nz](http://www.hdc.org.nz) and search for “code of consumer rights”.

If you are under 16 years old, you can still consent to your own medical treatment, but you need to be competent to do so. This means the health provider must believe you can give informed consent.

It is illegal to have sex if you or the person you are having sex with is aged under 16. If this is happening, the health provider could let someone know. But this is only if they thought you were at risk of serious harm. Being at risk of serious harm does not include you having consensual sex (sex you agree to) with someone your own age.

You can read more about sexual consent and the law on BodySafe ([bodysafe.nz/consent](http://bodysafe.nz/consent)).

If you have had a sexual experience that you did not want or you have been made to do a sexual act by another person, this is known as sexual harm. For advice and support, contact Safe to talk. This is a free national 24-hour seven day a week confidential service for anyone looking for help to do with sexual harm. Phone **0800-044-334**, text **4334**.

*Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Last reviewed February 2024.*