

Access to
information

the Patients' rights charter

Access to
health care
services

Lawful, fair
administrative
actions

Access to
adequate
housing

Dignity,
equality and
life

A healthy
environment

Basic
education

Access to
social security

Personal
freedom and
security

Stand Up! · Speak Out! · Do Something!
Good Health
is your right

Freedom
of religion,
belief and
opinion

What is the Patients' Rights Charter?

The Patients' Rights Charter of South Africa is a charter of the National Department of Health that promotes and protects your rights as a patient in the health care sector. The charter has been around since 1999 and tells you what your rights and responsibilities are as a patient when you go for treatment and medication at health facilities. During apartheid people may have been treated badly at hospitals and clinics. The Patients' Rights Charter reminds us to be respectful towards one another as nurses, doctors and patients at hospitals and clinics.

The South African Patients' Rights Charter

Rights	Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A healthy and safe environment• Participation in health care decision making• Access to health care• Knowledge about insurance/ medical schemes• Choice of health services• Treatment by a named health care provider• Confidentiality and privacy• Informed consent• The right to refuse treatment• Referral for a second opinion• Continuity of care• Freedom to complain about poor quality of health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take care of your health• Protect and care for the environment• Respect the rights of other patients as well as health care providers• Take care of health records, such as clinic or hospital cards• Give health care providers relevant, accurate information to facilitate diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and counselling• Comply with the prescribed treatment and/or rehabilitation requirements• Obtain information about local health services• Enquire about costs of treatment and rehabilitation and make appropriate arrangements for payment• Use, not abuse, the health care system• Inform health care providers of the death of a patient



Why do you need to know about the Patients' Rights Charter?

When going to the nearest clinic or Day Hospital for treatment and medicine, knowing what your rights and responsibilities are as a patient makes it easier for you to respond to doctors, nurses and other patients if they are rude to you or treat you badly.

What can the Patients' Rights Charter do for you?

As a patient you can use it as a tool to claim your rights to good quality health care. It helps to raise awareness about human rights in the health sector and puts the Constitution and the Bill of Rights into practice by promoting access to health care, equity and patient rights that you as a patient can expect to receive and demand, just because you are human. BUT you are also responsible for your own health. For example, you need to sleep for six to seven hours at night, exercise regularly and eat fruit and vegetables every day. Avoid smoking and excessive drinking.

What can't the Patients' Rights Charter do for you?

The Charter does not look at other factors that are necessary for you as a patient to be healthy, such as the food you eat, your living conditions, adequate housing, clean toilets and access to running water. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution and the National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003) work with the Charter to cover your other rights.

Who can you complain to if you feel your right to health is not respected?

Public health should look after communities and populations and not just individuals. Every member of the community can benefit and be healthy if the whole community is healthy. So you can complain as an individual and as a community.

- At **Primary Health Care level** (Clinics and Community Health Centres/Day Hospitals) look for the Complaints Box or speak to your Clinic Manager or the Facility Manager at the Community Health Centre.
- At **Provincial Government level**, phone 021 483 5624 or contact:
The Complaints Manager
Dept. of Health
P. O Box 2060
CAPE TOWN
8000
- At **National Government level**, contact the National Complaints Centre at 08100 20 14 14

How can doctors, nurses and patients work together?

Doctors and nurses can help you to look after your health, BUT you are also responsible for looking after your own health. Sometimes, part of your treatment means that you have to go to another specialist (doctor, physiotherapist or social worker) at another hospital or clinic. Doctors and nurses will refer you to them so that you can get the treatment you need. In this way, doctors and nurses help patients to claim their rights to good health care.

Sometimes doctors and nurses can treat patients disrespectfully and sometimes patients are rude to staff. The charter is there to try to help us to learn to trust and respect one another. The responsibility for your health is shared between you and the doctor and/or nurse. Knowing your rights and responsibilities as a patient means that you have to treat the doctors, nurses and other patients with respect and they, in turn, must treat you with respect. In this way, we can learn to trust each other.



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1. The right to health
2. Community involvement and the right to health
- 3. The patients' rights charter**
4. Individual and collective rights in public health
5. Access to information
6. Rights and resource allocation



People's Health Movement



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