

Health Care Rights Of Those Under Eighteen Years Of Age

If I am under 18 years of age, what health care services may I receive without the consent of my parent or guardian?

- You may receive an abortion and abortion related services at any age without the consent of a parent, guardian or the man who impregnated you.
- You may choose or refuse birth control services at any age without the consent of a parent or guardian.
- You may receive outpatient mental health counseling if you are thirteen years of age or older without the consent of a parent or guardian.
- You may receive treatment for sexually transmitted diseases if you are fourteen years of age or older without the consent of a parent or guardian. (This includes tests and treatment to determine if you have a sexually transmitted disease.)
- You may receive outpatient substance abuse treatment if you are thirteen years of age or older without the consent of a parent or guardian.

If you are over 18 years of age or emancipated you have all the health care rights of an adult and may receive or refuse any type of treatment you desire without anyone's consent. A person under 18 years of age can, under certain circumstances, become emancipated and have all the rights and responsibilities of an adult. See our publication [Emancipation of Minors](#) which contains the forms and instructions needed to get an emancipation.

In circumstances other than the ones listed above, the right of people under eighteen years of age to receive health care treatment without the consent of a parent or guardian is unclear. State laws seem to say that those under the age of eighteen need their parent's or a guardian's permission to receive health care treatment. On the other hand, Washington State Supreme Court decisions indicate that people under eighteen years of age have significant privacy rights in what happens to their bodies.

If you need medical treatment without your parent's consent, and it is not clear from the above that you have a right to have that treatment without your parent's consent, you should talk to a health care provider. Ask the provider if your conversation is "privileged." A privileged conversation is one that will not be revealed to any other person without your permission. If they answer "yes," explain to the provider why it is important that you get the medical treatment you need without your parent's or a guardian's permission. Then ask if the provider is willing to treat you under those circumstances and conditions.

For more detailed information, see the publication [Minors' Health Care Rights in Washington State](#) which can be found online at www.washingtonlawhelp.org.

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