

Healthcare complaints – tips for making a complaint

Making a complaint directly to the healthcare worker or health service that provided your care is often the quickest and easiest way to have your concerns about your healthcare resolved. Even if you have signed a consent form or received a refund, you can still make a complaint.

The tips on this page are here to help you with making that complaint.



1. Get support

Making a complaint can be emotional and you may need to tell your story more than once. Make sure you take care of yourself and ask for help if you need it.

Talk to someone you trust such as a family member or friend. They can be with you when you make a complaint. Staff from a community organisation or advocacy group might also be able to support you.

There are services available to support you during this difficult time. You can access cultural support or use an interpreter, where required. Ask the healthcare worker or health service for cultural support or a translator or interpreter or contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 (free service).



2. How to make a complaint

Talk to someone at the health service, or look at their website to find out about their complaints process.

Find out who is responsible for complaints at the health service. Some big health services such as hospitals will have staff who can help you with this, such as a patient advisor, consumer liaison officer or complaints officer.

Find out the different ways to make a complaint (in person, over the phone, or by letter, email, form, or online through a website or app).

Tips on what information to include in your complaint are set out below.



3. Keep notes

Write down who you speak or write to, the dates, anything they promise they will do and the date they say they will get back to you. Keep copies of all documents sent to you.

This will help you keep track of things and may be useful later if you decide to complain to a different organisation.



4. Ask questions

If you are not sure what will happen next, you can ask questions. You may want to know:

- How will they keep my complaint private?
- What will happen next?
- When will I get a response?
- Who will contact me?
- Is cultural support available? (for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander patients)
- How will they contact me?
- Who will review the complaint if I'm not happy with the result?



5. If you are unhappy with the response

If you think the matter has not been resolved fairly you can take it further. The health service should tell you about the next steps you can take.

All states and territories have organisations that handle healthcare complaints. They can help settle problems that happened with a healthcare worker or health service.

If you're not sure where to go next, you can get information about who can help you with your concerns:

- Information on how to contact your local health complaints organisation is available at <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications/Further-information/Health-complaints-organisations.aspx>
- Information on how to contact Ahpra is available at <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/Contact-Us.aspx>



Information to include in a complaint

Include as many facts as you can remember:

- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- What was the date and time?
- Who was involved? It's okay if you don't remember people's names; you can explain their role.
- What effect has it had on you or your family?

Explain what you want to happen after making the complaint. For example, would you like:

- an apology
- more information about what happened or an explanation
- a refund or compensation
- to access or change your health records
- to access treatment or medicine
- a change in process to stop it from happening again.

Give copies of documents that support your complaint. For example, letters, emails, text messages, medical records, photos, receipts or invoices.

What to look for in a good response

The response to your complaint from the healthcare worker or health service should:

- explain what has been done in response to your complaint
- give reasons for the decision
- explain what will happen next
- give information about how to have the decision reviewed or make a further complaint if you are unhappy with the outcome.