Being an involuntary patient at a mental health hospital

This easy read information sheet is about staying in hospital for mental health treatment as an involuntary patient.

Mental health is about how you think and how you feel.

Treatments are things that can help you feel better.

You are an involuntary patient if you must stay in hospital for mental health treatment until you are well enough to go home.
If you choose to go to hospital for mental health treatment you are a **voluntary patient**.

An involuntary patient is **different** to a voluntary patient.

There is a different easy read information sheet about **Being a voluntary patient in a mental health hospital** or go to [www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects/easyread](http://www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects/easyread).
Going to hospital as an involuntary patient

Sometimes you may not be able to make choices that are safe because of your mental health.

Usually someone will take you to hospital because they are worried about your mental health.

This could be

- a family member
- a support person
- a health worker
- police
- an ambulance

A doctor decides whether you have to stay in hospital.
A doctor can only make you stay in hospital if they think you are

- mentally ill
- mentally disordered

**Mentally ill** is when you have a mental illness that makes it hard to cope with your feelings and thoughts.

Some examples of mental illness are

- strongly believing something that is not true (such as thinking someone is controlling your thoughts)
- seeing or hearing things that are not there
- very serious problems with mood

Mental illness can also be called something like

- depression
- schizophrenia
- anxiety
Mentally disordered is when someone is doing things that are dangerous or do not make sense.

Being scheduled is when you must stay in hospital for mental health treatment.

There is an easy read information sheet about the rules about being scheduled.

See Your rights as an involuntary patient or go to www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects/easyread.
Treatment in hospital

When you are an involuntary patient you can be given the treatment that you need even if you do not want it.

Mental health workers are only allowed to give you treatment that you need to help you get better.

Mental health workers are people who work to help you with your mental health.
Mental health workers must always tell you what your medical treatment is.

You can ask about your treatment at any time.

The **Mental Health Review Tribunal** can decide that you need **ECT**.

The **Mental Health Review Tribunal** is a group of people who know a lot about mental health treatment and the law.

**ECT** is short for electro convulsive therapy.

ECT is sometimes used to help mental illnesses when other treatments or medicines do not work.
If you get sick in hospital doctors may say you need an operation.

If you are not well enough to decide about an operation doctors can ask your designated carer.

They can agree it is OK.

A designated carer is a person who you have chosen to be told information about your hospital stay.

Other people, such as the Mental Health Review Tribunal can also decide you need to have an operation.

Doctors are only allowed to do the operation if

- it is best for your health
- you need it
Leaving hospital

When you are an involuntary patient you cannot leave the hospital unless the mental health workers say you are well enough.

It is not your choice when you can leave.

You can go home when your doctor says you can.

If you think you are well enough to leave hospital you can ask a doctor or mental health worker if you can be discharged.

Being discharged means leaving hospital.
You can get someone you trust to help you to ask or ask for you.

This may be
- your family member
- your friend
- your support person

Mental health workers may ask you to fill in a form that says you have asked to leave.

After you ask to leave a doctor must see you within 3 work days to decide if you can go home.

Work days are Monday to Friday.
If you do not get an answer from a doctor about leaving hospital within 3 work days you can ask the Mental Health Review Tribunal to decide.

There is an easy read information sheet about the Mental Health Review Tribunal or go to www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects/easyread.
If you have not been given the treatment and care you need

If you have not been given the mental health treatment you need you have a right to tell someone.

If you are not happy with how hospital workers or other patients have treated you then you can tell someone.

You can tell someone you trust.

That might be
- a family member
- a friend
- a support person
- a hospital worker
You can also talk to an **Official Visitor**.

**Official Visitors** make sure people in hospital are treated well.

They do not work for the hospital.

Someone you trust can also talk to an Official Visitor.

This may be
- a family member
- a friend
- a support person

To make an appointment with an Official Visitor call **1800 208 218**.

It is free to call this number.

You can also ask someone you trust to call for you.
If you need legal help you can call the Mental Health Advocacy Service.

Someone you trust can also call the Mental Health Advocacy Service.

The Mental Health Advocacy Service phone number is 9745 4277.

There is an easy read information sheet about Getting help or go to www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects/easyread.

There is a list of what some words mean in this information sheet here or go to www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/projects/easyread.
The NSW Mental Health Act- Involuntary admission to hospital

Authors

Janelle Weise¹, Bronwyn Newman¹, Claire Eagleson¹, Karen Fisher², and Julian Trollor¹.

¹Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry, School of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, UNSW Sydney
²Social Policy Research Centre, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW Sydney

This information sheet is part of a series of easy read resources explaining

- how people can access public mental health services in New South Wales and
- what they can expect.

For information on how to support people to use easy read see [Making mental health information accessible for people with intellectual disability – A Toolkit](#)

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