



## Effective communication in healthcare

Everyone has the right to be informed about the health services, costs and treatment options available to them, and receive timely communication in a way they can understand.

### Why is communication in healthcare important?

Effective communication between a health practitioner and their patient can improve overall satisfaction and contribute towards better long-term health outcomes.

How well a patient understands the information provided can also have an impact on healthcare decisions they might make in future.

If a patient does not understand the information they receive, there may be an increased risk of instructions being followed incorrectly, or an adverse event occurring.

Communication issues are a common area of health service complaints in Queensland, so it's important for health service providers to consider the communication needs of each patient and continually review their communication approach.

### Communication complaints

Communication and information systems is the third most common type of health service complaint received by the Office of the Health Ombudsman.

The most common communication complaints are in relation to:

- poor attitude or manner
- providing inadequate information
- providing incorrect or misleading information
- not accommodating special needs.

### Improving communication

According to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 60 per cent of the population has difficulty understanding complex healthcare concepts and information.

To help communicate as effectively as possible, health practitioners should:

- recognise most people will be unfamiliar with healthcare information and address each patient's level of understanding
- adopt a range of communication strategies
- provide adequate information to patients in a compassionate manner
- confirm that the patient has understood all the information provided
- encourage patients to ask questions
- undertake education to improve health literacy skills when communicating to patients.

#### For more information:

Visit: [www.oho.qld.gov.au](http://www.oho.qld.gov.au)

Call: 133 OHO (133 646)

Write: PO Box 13281 George Street  
Brisbane, Qld, 4003

Email: [info@oho.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@oho.qld.gov.au)