



Clinical Toolkit

Clinical Tips: Addressing Confidentiality Issues

Confidentiality is a crucial issue when treating young people, and not addressing it can cause young people to disengage. This Clinical Tips sheet outlines how to address confidentiality issues in the clinic.

Clearly explain confidentiality and its limits to young people and their family when they first present

Consider how your practice contacts young people, for instance about results for sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing

Ask the young person for consent to contact them, how they would like to be contacted and who may be contacted

Within the limits of confidentiality, **health workers generally have no obligation to share information with parents/guardians if their patients are over 16 years of age** (although ideally parents/family should always be involved in a young person's care).

Note that a young person can **request written correspondence or phone calls not to go to their home.**

Adolescents over 14 years of age are able to make decisions about their own care if seen as having the 'capacity' to do so.

The 'mature minor' principle: an adolescent under the age of 18 years is capable of giving informed consent when he or she achieves a sufficient understanding and intelligence to enable him or her to understand fully what is proposed.

It is important to document the assessment for a mature minor, including the reasons in your notes. If you are unsure, then it is important to obtain the opinion of a colleague and document this.