

# 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.**

### Confidentiality

**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**

### Consent to treatment

**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.