

Patient Information Leaflet – Chaperones

Your comfort, dignity and safety are important to us

This leaflet explains what a chaperone is, why you might be offered one, what to expect, your rights, and what happens if you decline.

Intimate examinations – what are intimate examinations?

Intimate examinations are likely to include examinations of breasts, genitalia and rectum, but could also include any examination where it is necessary to touch, examine intimate parts of the patient's body digitally, or even be close to the patient. Some patients may have particular concerns about undressing or exposing parts of their body but feel hesitant to speak up.

Intimate examinations or procedures can be embarrassing or distressing for patients. Before you carry out an intimate examination or procedure, it is essential that every effort is made to ensure patients feel as safe and in control of the situation as possible.

Intimate examinations can be carried out for a variety of reasons (such as assessment, diagnosis, treatment and screening), and can take place in a variety of settings, including in person and remote consultations, such as by video-link or other digital technology.

When a clinician carry out an intimate examination, they should, wherever possible, offer the patient the option of having a chaperone who can act as an impartial observer.

What is a chaperone?

A chaperone is a trained member of our clinical or support team who can be present during a face-to-face, online and or physical examination. Their role is to support you, help you feel at ease, and act as an impartial observer for your protection and ours.

Why might you be offered a chaperone?

We offer a chaperone so that you:

- Feel comfortable and supported
- Have someone present during intimate or sensitive examinations
- Are protected from misunderstanding or discomfort
- Know someone is there to respect your dignity and privacy

We follow updated national standards that recommend offering a chaperone for certain examinations and whenever a patient wants one.

What the clinician will do

Your clinician will always:

1. Explain the reason for the examination or consultation – what will happen and why it's needed.
2. What to expect during the examination.
3. Offer you an opportunity to ask questions.
4. During your examination if the examination differs from what you have been informed, explain why proceed with your permission.
5. Offer you a chaperone before any sensitive examination.
6. Respect your choice – you can accept or decline.
7. Document your decision – whether a chaperone was offered, accepted or declined, and by whom.
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What to expect if a chaperone is present

If you choose a chaperone:

- They will be introduced by name and role
- They will be present for all or part of the examination as agreed with you
- They will act as a support and observer
- They will respect your confidentiality at all times

A chaperone does not take part in the examination – they are there for reassurance and safeguarding.

Your rights

You have the right to:

- Ask for a chaperone at any time – at booking, before, or during your appointment
- Choose a chaperone of a specific gender where possible
- Change your mind and ask for a chaperone even if one wasn't offered initially
- Say no to a chaperone

What if I say no to a chaperone?

If you decline a chaperone:

- The clinician will respect your choice
- The clinician may still choose to have a chaperone present if necessary for your safety or clinical best practice
- Your discussion and decision will be recorded in your record

How to request a chaperone

You can request a chaperone:

- When you book your appointment
- When you arrive for your appointment
- At any point during your consultation

Please let us know in advance if possible so we can arrange for a trained chaperone.

Confidentiality and respect

All staff acting as chaperones are bound by the same confidentiality and professional standards as clinicians.