

Consensus Statement: **Informed Consent and Decision Making**

The New Zealand College of Midwives believes midwifery care takes place in partnership with women^{1,2}. It is the midwife's professional responsibility to uphold each woman's right to informed decision making throughout the childbirth experience.

Rationale:

Informed decision-making involves the exchange and understanding of relevant information. Informed decision-making emphasises the autonomy of the individual. It respects the rights of individuals to make decisions about actions, which affect them. Making an informed decision is part of a process, which results in either informed consent or refusal.

Practice Notes:

- Information should be provided in a way that the woman and her family can understand. It must be accurate, objective, relevant and culturally appropriate. It should include:
 - the proposed treatment/intervention
 - the benefits of the treatment/intervention
 - the risks of the treatment/intervention
 - the alternatives to the treatment proposed and their risks and benefits
 - what would happen if no treatment/ intervention were used
- Where there is more than one professional perspective on a given issue this should be acknowledged and information given on, and how to access, this perspective.
- Women should be given time to think about the information and discuss it with others.
- Documentation should include a brief outline of the information given and when this occurred. All decisions should be clearly documented. Written consent must be obtained where either party requests it.
- Informed consensus is dynamic. If new evidence comes to light, the woman and the family have the right to change their minds.

References:

1. New Zealand College of Midwives, Midwives Handbook for Practice. 5th ed. 2015, Christchurch: New Zealand College of Midwives.
2. Guilliland, K. and S. Pairman, The Midwifery Partnership, A Model for Practice. 2nd ed. 2010, Christchurch, New Zealand: New Zealand College of Midwives.

Bibliography:

Code of Health and Disability Services – Consumers Rights
Health and Disability Commission
www.hdc.org.nz (accessed 24 April 2016)

Health and Disability Advocacy
Health and Disability Commission
www.hdc.org.nz/Advocacy Services in your area (accessed 24 April 2016)

Midwives Handbook for Practice (5th ed)
New Zealand College of Midwives, Christchurch, 2015

Ratification:

This statement was originally ratified at the New Zealand College of Midwives AGM May 1996
References updated: 2000, 2009
Reviewed and updated August 2016

The purpose of New Zealand College of Midwives Consensus Statements is to provide women, midwives and the maternity services with the profession's position on any given situation. The guidelines are designed to educate and support best practice. All position statements are regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.