

Checklist for Respectful Care in Women's Health

6 tips for health care professionals



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Use this checklist to support your own day-to-day practice, to guide members of your team, and to communicate to your patients your department's commitment to respectful women's health care.

1. Create a trustworthy environment	<p>Emphasise and ensure confidentiality and privacy.</p> <p>Broaden your understanding of your patient's situation before making any decision or assumption.</p> <p>Invest the time to build trust with your patient.</p> <p>Listen carefully to your patient.</p> <p>Recognise your patient for their openness, honesty and courage if appropriate.</p> <p>Ensure that you have obtained informed consent from your patient before you take any further steps towards management.</p>
2. Put yourself in your patient's shoes	<p>What would your feelings, fears and doubts be if you were in your patient's position?</p> <p>Consider the emotional and psychological consequences your actions will have on your patient.</p> <p>Reflect on how attitudes and stigma could impact on your patient's health-seeking behaviour.</p> <p>Be mindful that the patient might have had a bad experience prior to seeing you – be the good example.</p> <p>Be sensitive to how your patient is going to feel after the consultation and explain how they can seek support.</p>
3. Understand your own situation	<p>Are you tired, preoccupied or feeling stressed? Be aware of your own emotional state when you see your patient and try not to let anything negatively affect your attitude or engagement.</p> <p>Put your patient's needs first – think of the best options for them at the time; it could be to refer them or involve a counsellor or translator.</p> <p>Consider and address any of your own prejudices or beliefs that could affect the quality of care you deliver.</p>
4. Stay aware	<p>Remain acutely aware if your patient seems uncomfortable or upset by your behaviour, words or actions and consider how to improve the situation.</p> <p>Apologise for being mistaken, insensitive or causing any discomfort.</p> <p>Seek information about any patients who you suspect may have stopped seeking care.</p> <p>If you see any signs respectful care is lacking at your workplace, escalate and try to solve the issue using the policies in place.</p> <p>Protect your own right to be treated with respect.</p>
5. Balance compassion and professionalism	<p>Show compassion and understanding but remember to stay professional.</p> <p>Sympathy should be followed with options and choices for your patient. Ensure you can explain the consequences of each option open to them.</p> <p>Reassure your patient you know what to do. Do not panic but portray yourself as trustworthy, decisive and competent. But remember the limitations of your knowledge and understanding and refer if you feel out of your depth.</p> <p>Try not to let what happens to your patient affect you personally.</p>
6. Promote a culture of respect	<p>Influence others around you by seeking to improve situations where you witness judgement or blaming of patients.</p> <p>Make visible to patients through posters and leaflets what respectful care means and clear guidance on how to complain if they feel they have not been treated respectfully.</p> <p>Try to ensure that non-discriminatory policies and awareness training on equality and diversity are available at your workplace.</p> <p>Look for resources to share best practice on respectful care.</p>

Ensure your patients always receive respectful care

Every patient deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. Use this helpful 'do' and 'don't' guide to improve every day practice and ensure high-quality, respectful care at your workplace.

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Support your patient's right to respectful care✓ Show compassion but remain professional✓ Understand your and your patient's background✓ Remember confidentiality, privacy and dignity✓ Express interest and kindness towards your patient✓ Remember your patients seek your support and rely on your expertise✓ Continuously seek improvement in your practice of respectful care✓ Take time to reflect on your own mood and behaviour✓ Empower patients and make them feel heard and welcome✓ Be aware of your limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Assume the patient is to blame✗ Judge the patient✗ Show disrespect or shaming behaviour✗ Act disinterested✗ Ignore the signs of disrespect if evidence in your facility✗ Expect patients to share your values and views✗ Patronise your patient or other staff✗ Let any personal problems influence the way you deliver care✗ Use unprofessional or rude language✗ Ignore red flags✗ Let confidentiality, dignity and privacy of your patient be compromised in any way✗ Display any abusive behaviour – mentally, physically or by the withdrawal of care.