

**RESPECTFUL MATERNITY CARE**



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UNIVERSAL RIGHTS OF  
**WOMEN AND  
NEWBORNS**

# THE UNIVERSAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND NEWBORNS

## 1 Everyone has the right to **freedom** from harm and ill-treatment.

No one is allowed to physically hurt you or your baby. You should both be taken care of in a gentle and compassionate way and receive assistance when experiencing pain or discomfort.

## 2 Everyone has the right to **information** and informed **consent**

No one is allowed to force you to or do any medical procedure on you or your newborn without your knowledge or consent. Every woman, parent or guardian has the right to receive information, including patient records and discharge summary, and provide informed consent in the language and terms that they understand. Every parent or guardian has the right to refusal for their newborn's care, in the newborn's best interests, unless otherwise provided by law.

## 3 Everyone has the right to a **companion** of their choice and **preference** during maternity care

No one is allowed to refuse you a birth companion. Every woman has the right to a birth companion during maternity care. Every newborn has a right to be with a parent or guardian during their stay in a facility.

## 4 Everyone has the right to **privacy** & **confidentiality**

No one is allowed to share your or your newborn's personal or medical information, including all records and images, without your consent. Your privacy and that of your newborn must be protected, except as necessary for healthcare providers to convey information for continuity of care.

## 5 Everyone is their own person from the moment of birth & has the right to be treated with **dignity** & **respect**

No one is allowed to humiliate, verbally abuse, speak about or touch you or your newborn in a degrading or disrespectful manner. You and your newborn baby must be cared for with respect and compassion.

## 6 Everyone has the right to equality, freedom from discrimination & **equitable care**

No one is allowed to discriminate against you or your newborn because of something they think or do not like about either one of you. Equality requires that pregnant women have the same protections under the law as they would when they are not pregnant, including the right to make decisions about what happens to their body.

7 Everyone has the right to **healthcare** & to the highest attainable level of health

No one may prevent you or your newborn from getting the healthcare needed or deny or withhold care from either one of you. You and your newborn are entitled to non-discriminatory, affordable, highest quality care, provided in a timely manner, in a clean and safe environment, by providers who are trained in current best practices.

8 Everyone has the right to **liberty, autonomy, self-determination, freedom from arbitrary detention and to refuse informal payments**

No one is allowed to detain you or your newborn in a healthcare facility, even if you cannot pay for services received. Every woman, parent or guardian has the right to refuse informal payments for services provided free in public health facilities.

9 Every child has the right to be **with their parents** or guardians

No one is allowed to separate you from your newborn without your consent. You and your newborn have the right to remain together at all times, even if your newborn is born small, premature or with medical conditions that require extra care.

10 Every child has the right to an **identity & nationality** from birth

No one is allowed to deny your newborn birth registration, even if they die shortly after birth, or deny the nationality your newborn is legally entitled to.

11 Everyone has the right to adequate **nutrition & clean water**

No one is allowed to prevent you and your newborn from having adequate nutrition, clean drinking water, access to clean toilets and healthy environment. You have the right to information and support on child nutrition and the advantages of breastfeeding.

12 Every woman and newborn has the right to timely and effective **grievance redressal**

No one is allowed to prevent you from seeking redressal for grievances. You have the right to an effective, transparent and, timely grievance redressal mechanism without fear of reprisal or retribution.

The charter is based on widely accepted human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It is also supported by regional human rights instruments such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, among others.



HEALTHY WOMEN. HEALTHY WORLD.

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