

Professional Guidelines: Informed Consent & Pregnancy

“Pregnancy is not an exception to the principle that a decisionally capable patient has the right to refuse treatment, even treatment needed to maintain life. Therefore, a decisionally capable pregnant woman’s decision to refuse recommended medical or surgical interventions should be respected.”

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, "Refusal of Medically Recommended Treatment During Pregnancy" (2016)

“Informed consent is a basic policy in both ethics and law that physicians must honor, unless the patient is unconscious or otherwise incapable of consenting and harm from failure to treat is imminent.”

American Medical Association, "Informed Consent" (2006)

“A fundamental tenet of contemporary medical ethics is the requirement of informed consent, including the right... to refuse medical treatment.”

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, "Maternal Decision Making, Ethics, and the Law" (2005)

"The freedom to accept or refuse recommended medical treatment has legal as well as ethical foundations. In the obstetric setting, recognize that a competent pregnant woman is the appropriate decision maker for the fetus that she is carrying."

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Ethical Decision Making in Obstetrics and Gynecology" (2007)

"The use of coercion is not only ethically impermissible but also medically inadvisable because of the realities of prognostic uncertainty and the limitations of medical knowledge. As such, it is never acceptable for obstetrician–gynecologists to attempt to influence patients toward a clinical decision using coercion. Obstetrician–gynecologists are discouraged in the strongest possible terms from the use of duress, manipulation, coercion, physical force, or threats, including threats to involve the courts or child protective services, to motivate women toward a specific clinical decision."

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, "Refusal of Medically Recommended Treatment During Pregnancy" (2016)