



The rights of people with disabilities.



People with disabilities and the right to health



EasyRead version of:
Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of person with disabilities.
July 2018



1. About this report **1**



2. Health of people with disabilities **3**



3. People with disabilities and the right to health **7**



4. Things that stop people with disabilities getting this right **12**



5. How to make sure people with disabilities can use healthcare services **24**



6. What happens next?

29



7. What the words mean

33



Sometimes we need to use new or difficult words.

These words are in **bold** and there is a list of what they mean at the end of this report.

1. About this report



The **United Nations** is a group of 193 countries that work together to make the world a safer place for everyone.



The international law called the United Nations **Disability Convention** says people with disabilities should have the same **human rights** as everyone else.



The **Special Rapporteur** is Catalina Devandas-Aguilar. She helps countries understand how to make sure people with disabilities can get their **rights**.



She writes a report every six months to tell the **United Nations** about **human rights** and people with disabilities.



This is an EasyRead version of Catalina's report about people with disabilities and the **right** to health.



Catalina sent questions to governments, organisations and people with disabilities' groups. She also spoke to experts from **United Nations** organisations, people with disabilities and people who study health.



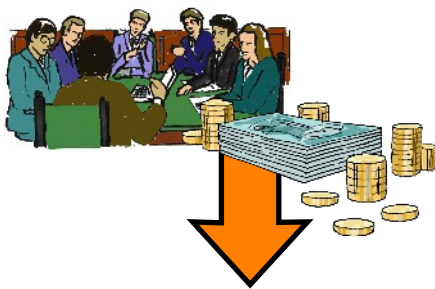
She found out more about how people with disabilities can have the best possible access to health. She looked at how to give them the same chance as everyone else to use all healthcare services.



2. Health of people with disabilities



People need good health to get the most out of life and have the same chances as other people. People with disabilities have the same health needs as everybody else.



If people have good healthcare when they need it, governments spend less on health and social care in general.



People with disabilities used to be treated as patients who were ill and had no **rights**. Doctors tried to cure them and did not think about what the person wanted. They did not expect them to do all the things other people do.



Now we understand that people with disabilities should have the same **rights** and chances as other people. This includes good healthcare services and other services that help people stay healthy:



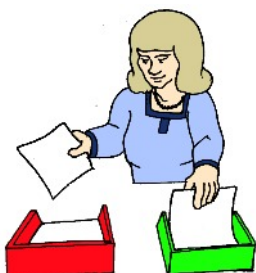
- safe housing that people can afford



- good transport



- schools



- the chance to work.



Having a disability does not mean that you are unhealthy. But some people with disabilities are less healthy than other people and often die younger. Sometimes this is because of their disability, but sometimes because:



- they have less money



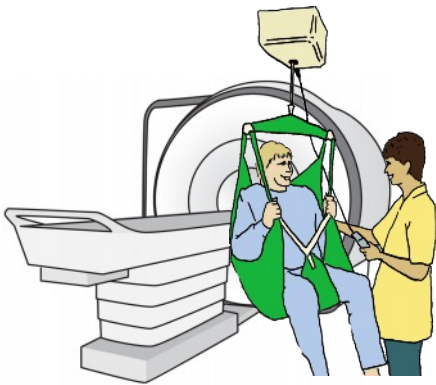
- people or services **discriminate** against them



- other people treat them badly or do not include them in their communities



- it is more difficult for them to use health services.



Some people with disabilities might need specialised services but governments must make sure they have the same chance as other people to use all health services. This includes services that stop them from getting ill or help them stay healthy.



Services and campaigns that stop people from getting ill or having an accident should never make people with a disability feel ashamed of who they are.



3. People with disabilities and the right to health



People with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else to:

- make decisions affecting their health and body



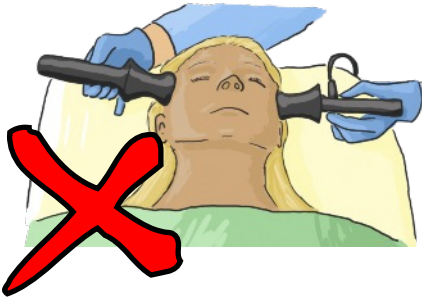
- get healthcare services and medicines they need



- have all the information to help decide about treatment



- only have treatment they agree to



- not be tortured, treated cruelly or punished



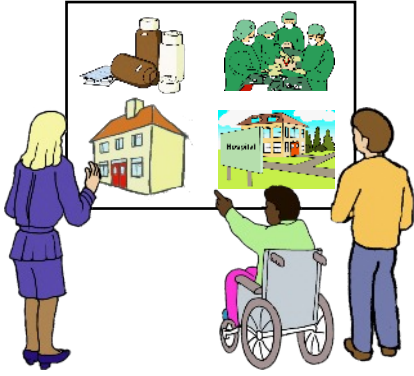
- have other things that help everyone stay healthy. For example, clean water, food, housing and information about health.



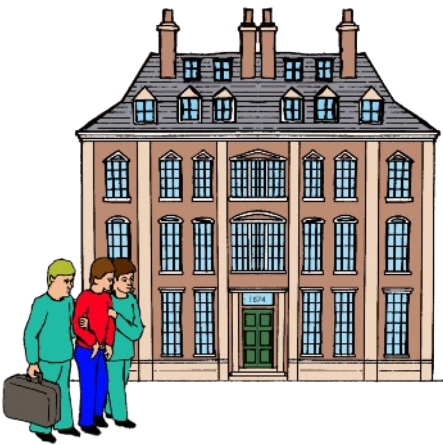
But people with a disability are often **discriminated** against. This means they are treated unfairly or do not have the same chances in life as other people.



The United Nations **Disability Convention** says governments must respect everyone's **right** to health and not do anything to affect this in a bad way.



Governments must make sure everyone has health services near to them and medicines, equipment and buildings they can use.



People with disabilities used to be kept in hospitals away from other people. This still happens in some places.



The United Nations **Disability Convention** says people with disabilities can refuse treatment or refuse to stay in hospital. Other people should not make decisions about their health or freedom.



The United Nations **Disability Convention** replaces other agreements about health.



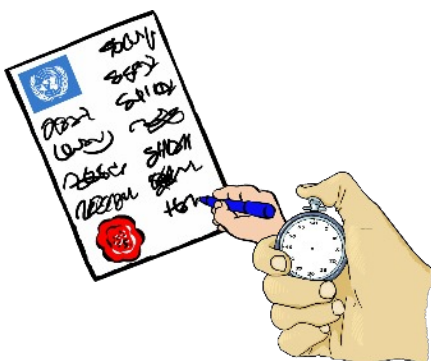
It says governments must stop thinking about disability as a medical problem. They must get rid of anything that stops people with disabilities being as healthy as possible and using the same health services as other people.



Governments must also make sure other organisations do not **discriminate** against people with disabilities. They must run health services that they can use.



Staff must be trained to understand disability and the healthcare must be as good as other people get. People with disabilities should get the healthcare they need as soon as possible.



Governments that sign the United Nations **Disability Convention** should do some things right away and other things as quickly as they can.



Some people with disabilities need **rehabilitation** services like physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, **psychology** support or **assistive technology**. These can help them live more independently and have better lives.



But only a small number of people get the services they need. It is especially difficult for people who are not wealthy or do not live in a wealthy country.



4. Things that stop people with disabilities getting the right to health



These are the main things that stop people with disabilities getting the best possible health.

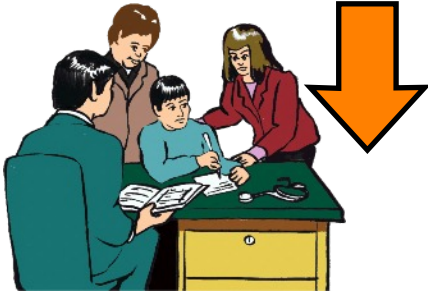
Having worse healthcare services than other people



People with disabilities can be less healthy than other people.



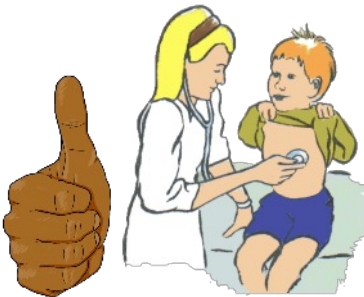
People with learning disabilities often die 15 to 20 years earlier than other people. People with mental health problems can die 20 to 25 years sooner.



Catalina found that children and adults with disabilities are more likely to need health services than other people. But less likely to get the services they need.



Sometimes this is because of their illness or disability. But usually it is because they do not know about or do not get:



- good health care



- health checks for illnesses like cancer, high blood pressure or **diabetes**



- support and information about exercise, diet and staying healthy



- dental care



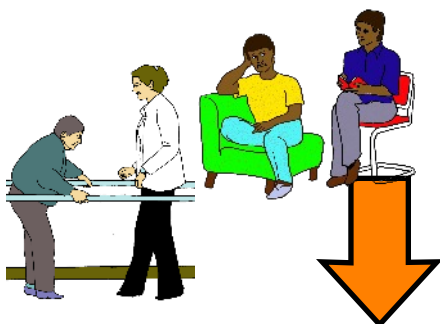
- mental health care in the community



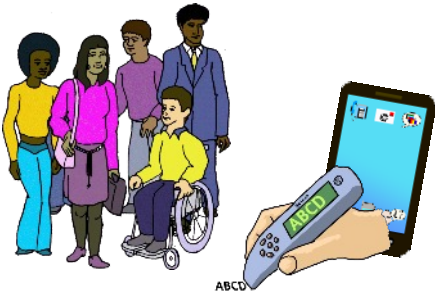
- **sexual health and reproductive health services.**



Children with disabilities often do not get proper healthcare when they are born or do not get vaccinations to stop them from getting serious diseases.

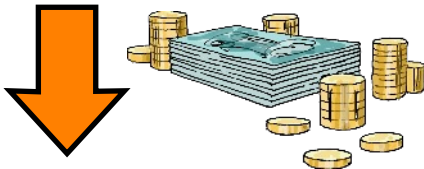


There are also not enough specialised services like physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, or **psychology**.



In poorer countries only 5 in every 100 people with a disability get **assistive technology**.

People with disabilities can also have poorer health because they:



- have less money



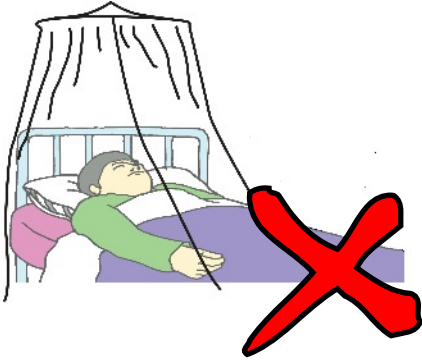
- are left out and not involved in their community



- are bullied or treated badly



- do not have safe drinking water or good food



- do not have bed nets to stop mosquito bites that lead to serious diseases.



Governments need to stop all of this so people with disabilities can be as healthy as others.



Not being able to use healthcare services

General health services think they cannot support people with disabilities properly. This is wrong.



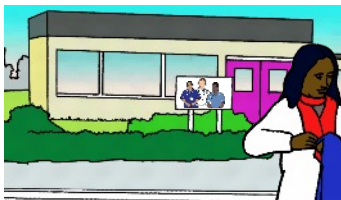
They often think that they cannot help them with health checks or information about staying healthy.



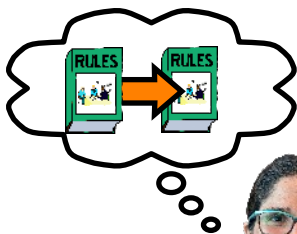
They can also have really negative ideas about what people with disabilities should do.



For example, they might think young girls and women with disabilities should not be enjoying sex or having babies. This can stop **sexual and reproductive health services** giving them the information or care they need.

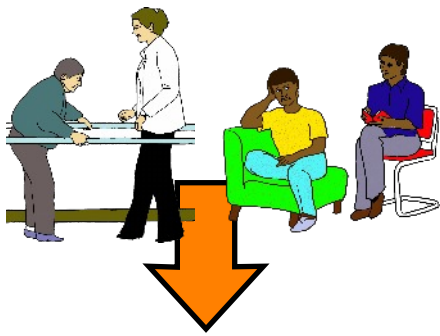


Some families feel ashamed if they have a child with disabilities. This can stop them going to healthcare services.

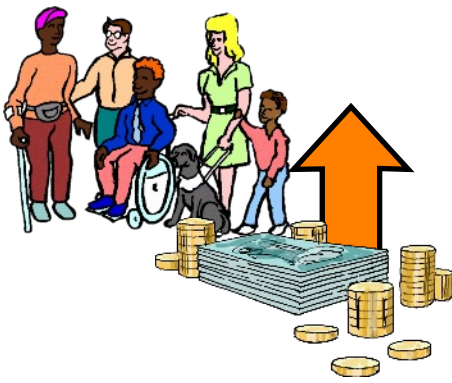


Catalina thinks rules about healthcare and ways to find out about disabilities need to change. They can lead to **discrimination** and stop people getting the services they need.

People with disabilities also find it difficult to get good health services because:



- There are not enough specialised services like physiotherapy or speech and language therapy especially in country areas or poorer countries.



- People with disabilities have to spend more on their health and often do not have a job.



- They cannot get the same **health insurance** as other people. This is **discrimination**.



- General services do not know how to give them the care they need or treat them with respect.

When healthcare services do not respect their human rights



In many countries services will not treat people with disabilities. They sometimes think an illness or health problem is just part of their disability. They also think that people with disabilities have less value or do not have the same right to a good life as other people.



Many healthcare services do not give people with disabilities treatment to stop pain, save their life or help them live longer. This is cruel and takes away their **rights** to health and life.



Healthcare services also take away peoples' rights when they:

- give them treatment they do not agree to



- keep them in a hospital against their will, sometimes because of their disability



- let other people take a decision on their care or treatment

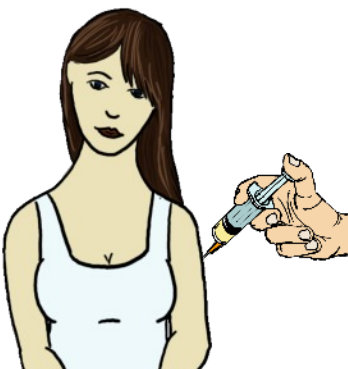


- give them painful or cruel treatments when they do not know if these will work.

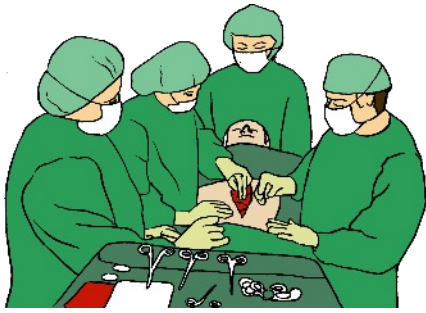


Many women with disabilities do not have the right to good **sexual and reproductive** health.

They are often abused.



Girls and young women with disabilities are often given **contraception** injections or **abortions** without agreeing or knowing what is happening.



Some are **sterilised** to stop them from getting pregnant.



If they have a baby, it can be taken away if their family or the government think they cannot look after it.



Some adults and children with disabilities are abused or treated cruelly in healthcare services. They may be given treatment doctors do not all agree on. It may cause pain and affect them in ways that cannot be changed back to how things were.

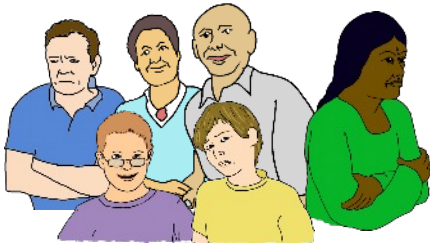


This can be the same as torture or ill-treatment if the person does not agree to have the treatment. They might also be kept on their own, **restrained** or given medicine to keep them quiet.



Sometimes they suffer sexual abuse from staff. People are more at risk of abuse when they are kept away from other people in places like nursing homes or services for children.

Discrimination for lots of different reasons



People with disabilities come from lots of different groups. Sometimes they are **discriminated** against because of their sex, age, race, religion or language as well as their disability.

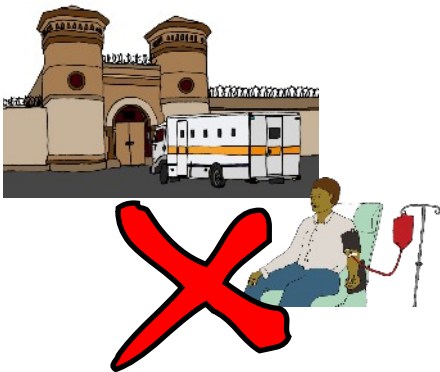
For example:

- girls and young women with disabilities are often treated worse than disabled boys and young men

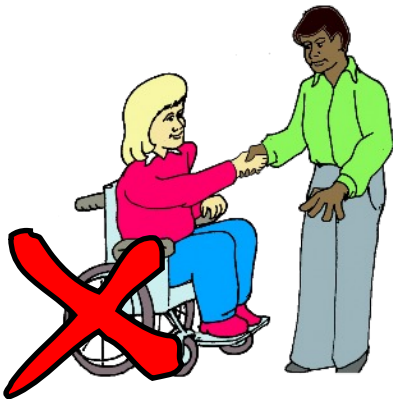




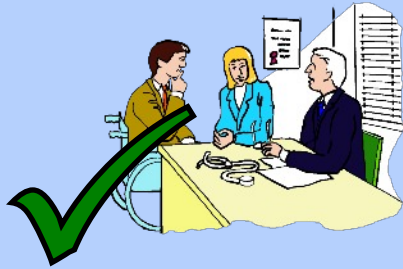
- children and older people with disabilities often live in homes or hospitals and do not have much choice about their care and treatment



- people with disabilities in prisons or refugee camps often do not get the treatment they need. Especially in an emergency.



Catalina thinks this is because healthcare services still treat disability as an illness. They do not respect children and adults with disabilities for who they are and give them the support they need.



5. How to make sure people with disabilities can use health care services



Governments that sign the ‘**Disability Convention**’ must think about 10 things:

1. Laws



Have laws that support people with disabilities to get the healthcare services and information they need. They must get rid of all laws that **discriminate** against persons with disabilities.



This includes support and information to help them decide about care, treatment or medicines.



2. Policies and plans

Make sure all plans about healthcare include people with disabilities and how they can use services.

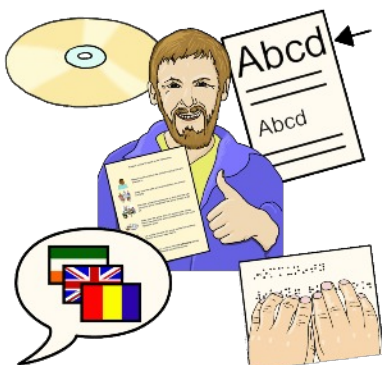


Make sure these plans do not lead to more **discrimination** against people with disabilities.



3. Healthcare for everyone

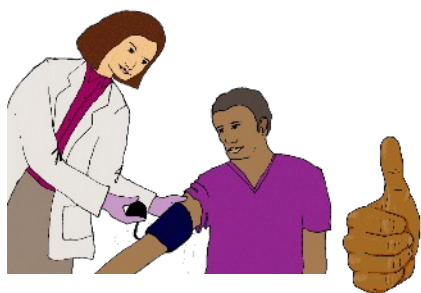
Make sure everyone has the same chance to use all health services and people with disabilities do not pay more than other people.



4. Services everyone can use

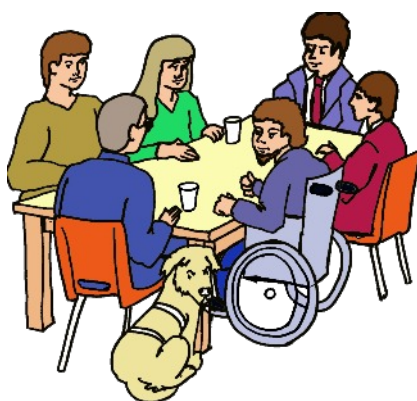
Make sure people with disabilities can use the same services and other specialised services they may need. This includes having signs in **Braille**, sign language interpreters and information in different ways, including EasyRead.

5. Treating everyone fairly



Make sure services get rid of **discrimination** and people with disabilities can get good, safe healthcare in their local community.

6. Involving people



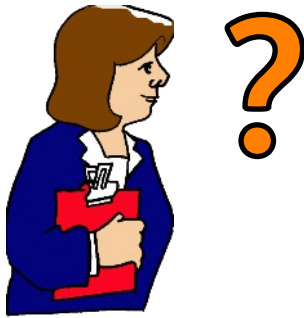
Involve people with disabilities and their organisations in plans about healthcare. They might want different things from healthcare staff or other people with disabilities. It is important to listen to what they say.

7. Asking services to say what they are doing

Government plans for health must say:

- what they expect services to do for people with disabilities





- how they will check this



- how people with disabilities can complain if they think someone has taken away this right.



8. Using their resources well

Check whether they use their money, staff and services well to make sure people with disabilities get their **right** to good health.



9. Helping people understand about disability and health

Help everyone understand that people with disabilities have a right to good healthcare.



Make it part of the training for anyone who works in healthcare services.



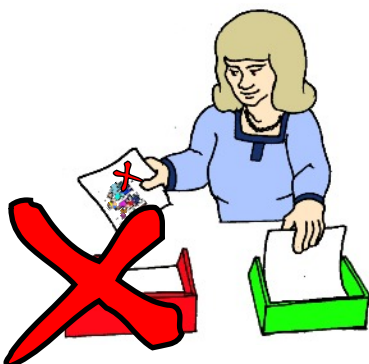
Give people with disabilities information they can understand about healthcare.

10. Working with other countries

The United Nations and organisations in other countries should:



- Talk about the right to health and people with disabilities in all their plans and projects. In a way that involves people with disabilities and their organisations.



- Not do any work that takes this right away from people with disabilities.



6. What happens next?



Governments that sign the United Nations **Disability Convention** must have laws and policies to give all people with disabilities their **human rights**.



This includes the **right** to good healthcare without **discrimination**.

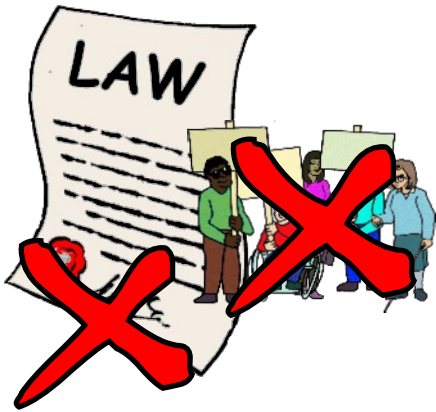


Catalina says governments must keep to the Disability Convention and make sure people with disabilities are included in and can use all healthcare services, projects and information.



She believes these things will help people with disabilities get the best possible health:

- have laws that say people with disabilities have the **right** to good health and it is **discrimination** to stop them from getting this



- get rid of any laws that take away this right or peoples' choice and freedom



- make sure people with disabilities can use all healthcare services. Also have special services to support them with their disability



- make sure people with disabilities know about, can use and afford all healthcare services



- make sure healthcare services work on human rights and do not **discriminate** against people with disabilities



- have information and services that people with disabilities can use to help them stay healthy



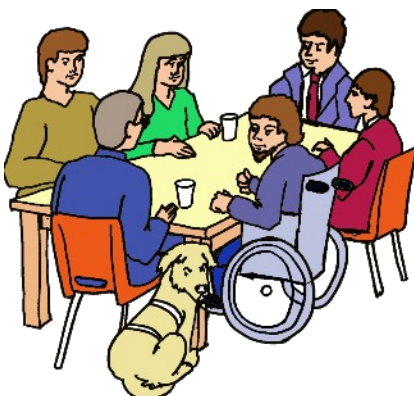
- Work with families as soon as they know their child has a disability. Explain how to keep their child healthy and that they have the same **rights** as other children



- Train healthcare staff to respect the **rights** of all people with disabilities and give them the support they need



- Check that all public and private healthcare services treat people with disabilities safely, fairly and without **discrimination**



- Involve people with disabilities and their organisations in all plans about healthcare



- Collect information about the health of people with disabilities and whether they can use healthcare services



- Use their money, staff and services to help people with disabilities get their **right** to good health. If a country gives money to help a poorer country they must make sure it helps everyone.



Catalina says the **World Health Organisation** and **United Nations** must think about the **right** of people with disabilities to have the best possible health in everything they do. They should involve people with disabilities and their organisations to make this happen.



7. What the words mean

Abortion – an operation to stop a pregnancy before the baby is born.

Assistive technology - an item or piece of equipment that helps a person with a disability do more and be more independent.

Braille – a way of writing things for blind people so they can feel the letters with their fingertips.

Contraception – things like a condom, pill or injection that can help stop a woman getting pregnant.

Diabetes – a disease that happens when your blood sugar is too high.

Disability Convention – a set of rules that countries have to follow to give people with disabilities the same human rights as everyone else.

Discrimination – treating someone worse than other people because of who you are or where you come from.

Health insurance - an agreement where you pay money to a company and they pay for healthcare if you need it

Human Rights – basic rights and freedoms that should happen for every person in the world.

Psychology – a way to find out about your mind and how it makes you behave.

Rehabilitation services – health care services like physiotherapy, speech and language therapy or psychology support that can help people do things they did before and live more independently.

Reproductive health - the right to decide whether or not to have children and support to have healthy children.

Restrain – to hold someone against their will, to stop them moving or going where they want to go.

Rights – things that should happen for every person.

Sexual health - the right to enjoy safe sex and keep well and healthy.

Special Rapporteur – a person working for the UN who helps countries understand what they need to do to make sure people get their rights.

Sterilisation – an operation to stop young girls and women being able to get pregnant.

United Nations (UN) – a group of 193 different countries that work together to try to make the world a better and safer place for everyone.



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