

how to
use the

care companion

GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE TEAMS

This is a guide for healthcare teams who would like to introduce the Care Companion to a patient and/or their carer to support their involvement in shared decision-making about treatment and care.



What is the care companion?

The *Care Companion* is a patient decision aid, designed to support shared decision-making for people with life-limiting illness. It can be introduced by patients, carers or their healthcare team, helping them to:

Understand the patient's condition and what might happen in the future

Share what is important to the patient

Understand the risks and benefits of treatment and care options

Choose the best option based on what is important to the patient

How is it different to other documents?

The Care Companion is different to advance care planning documents, which includes an *Enduring Power of Attorney*, *Advanced Health Care Directive*, *Statement of Choices*, or *Acute Resuscitation Plan*. These documents record the decisions that a patient has made about the care they would or would not want in the future if they could not speak for themselves. The Care Companion provides guidance on how to reach a decision. You can use the Care Companion to make a decision about the care you would or would not want in the future, which can be recorded in the advance care planning documents listed above.

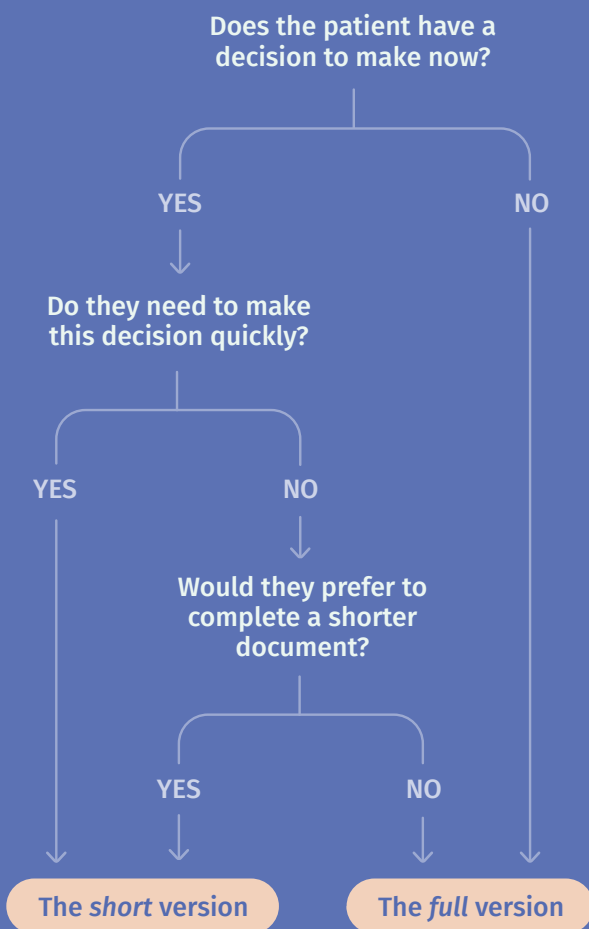
Why use the care companion?

In healthcare, there are many screening, treatment, and care options that have no single 'best' choice and are considered 'preference sensitive' due to inadequate evidence/outcomes or a need to 'trade-off' the benefits and harms. People with life-limiting illness often face 'preference sensitive' decisions regarding treatment that may prolong length of life but reduce quality of life. Decision aids support shared decision-making conversations, involving patients and/or carers in decision-making so that treatment and care is aligned to what matters most to them.

Decision aids improve patients' knowledge and understanding of options and associated risks, and help to clarify what matters most to them. Shared decision-making for 'preference sensitive' decisions is considered best practice, and is a core component of value-based healthcare. Research shows that many people with serious illness (and their carers) want to understand their condition, share what matters to them, and participate in shared decision-making.

Which version of the *Care Companion* should we use?

There are two versions of the care companion - the *short version* and the *full version*. Answer these questions to decide which is right for your patient.



How do I use the *Care Companion*?



1 prepare

Ask the patient if they would like to use the *Care Companion*, explaining how you want to use it – either to make a decision now or prepare for future decisions.

Ensure the patient has time to prepare for the conversation, writing down questions and deciding if they would like someone else to be included in the discussion.

Ensure you are well prepared to complete the *Care Companion*, discussing the case with colleagues and reviewing the evidence-based literature if needed.



2 complete

Assist the patient and their support people to complete the *Care Companion* with an appropriate member of the healthcare team.

Present realistic and achievable options that focus on both quantity and quality of life. Using simple language, explain the benefits and risks of each option in equal detail, helping patients to understand the holistic impact on their life.

Let patients work through the *Care Companion* at their own pace, speaking with different members of the healthcare team to understand the pros and cons of each option.



3 enact

Document the conversation and any decisions made in the patient's medical records and communicate with healthcare team as appropriate.

Support or guide the patient to complete follow-on actions, as well as encouraging them to share their *Care Companion* with friends, family and other members of their healthcare team.

If their condition changes or they have another decision to make, a new *Care Companion* can be completed, or the decision-making section can be repeated.