

how to use the **Care Companion**

GUIDE FOR PATIENTS AND CARERS

This is a guide for patients and carers who would like to use the *Care Companion* with their healthcare team to be involved in shared decision-making about treatment and care.

What is the care companion?

The *Care Companion* is a tool called a 'decision aid' that is designed to support shared decision-making for people with life-limiting conditions – those that might shorten a person's life. It may help you to:

- Understand your condition and what might happen in the future
- Share what matters to you
- Understand the risks and benefits of different options
- Decide on the best option based on what is important to you

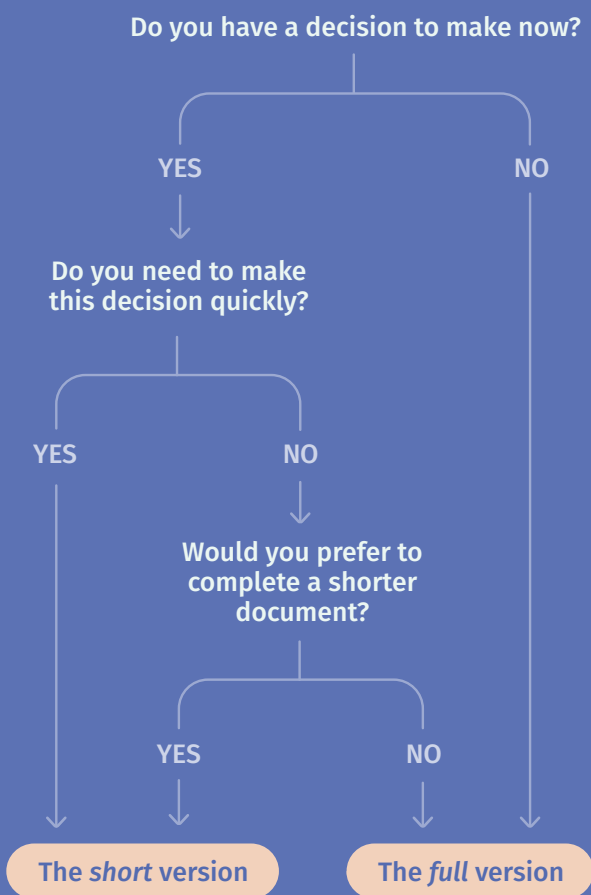
Why use the care companion?

In healthcare, there are many decisions that need to be made around treatment and care. Sometimes there is not a clear 'best option'. This may be because we don't know enough about the risks and benefits, or the options may involve 'trade-offs'. An example of a 'trade-off' may be choosing between quality of life and length of life. It is important that patients and families are involved in decision-making so the right treatment and care is provided, based on what matters to them. The *Care Companion* will support you to have these conversations with your healthcare team.



Which version of the *Care Companion* should I 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 you.



How do I use the *Care Companion*?



1 prepare

Tell your healthcare team in advance that you want to use the *Care Companion*, either to make a decision now or prepare for decision-making in the future. Make sure to give them time to prepare.

Make sure you are also prepared to use the *Care Companion*. Write down any questions you have, and decide who you would like to be included in the discussion to support you. You may want to complete the first two sections (*Truth telling* and *Values and preferences*) in advance.



2 complete

Sit down with your healthcare team and support people to work through the *Care Companion*. You may want or need to talk to different members of your healthcare team to complete different sections of the document.

If you have a decision to make now work through the whole document with your healthcare team.

If you don't have a decision to make work through the first two sections (*Truth telling* and *Values and preferences*) with your healthcare team, completing the remaining sections when it's time to make a decision.



3 enact

Keep your *Care Companion*, share with your friends and family, and take it with you to show other members of your healthcare team.

If your condition changes or you have another decision to make you can complete a new *Care Companion*, or you can repeat the decision-making section again.