

# how to engage in shared decision making

## GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE TEAMS

This guide outlines the key steps and conversation prompts for shared decision-making for people with a life-limiting condition. This guide can be used to support use of a patient decision aid such as the *Care Companion*, or a shared decision-making conversation not involving use of a patient decision aid.



The Care Companion decision aid can be downloaded here: [www.health.qld.gov.au/carecompanion](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/carecompanion)

## Key points on shared decision-making for people with a life-limiting condition

### Who leads the decision-making process?

It is important to acknowledge patients as an expert in their own lives, using your clinical expertise to support them in making choices that are right for them. A patient and family's level of involvement in the decision-making process can vary depending on their preferences and the situation. Sometimes it is appropriate for decision-making to be led by the healthcare team, with explicit knowledge of a patient's preferences and values.

### What if patients don't want to participate?

Some patients may not be ready or want to participate in shared decision-making. A patient's decision to have minimal or no involvement in the process, or to delegate the decision to the healthcare team or loved one, should be respected. It is still important for the healthcare team to understand their values to inform the decision made on their behalf.

### What if the patient has low health literacy?

People who have low health literacy or those who are vulnerable often receive less information and ask fewer questions. You may need to do more to engage such people in shared decision-making.

# Steps to shared decision-making

The following steps can be used to guide you in the process of shared decision-making, including actions you can take and patient-approved conversation prompts.

## 1 Set up the conversation

Introduce the concept of shared decision-making

Seek the patient's participation

Make sure the right people are present (in person or virtually)

We want to make sure you have the best care possible. To do this it would be good to talk about what is happening with your health, what might be ahead and what things are important to you. We would also like your input on deciding on the treatment and care that is right for you. Does this sound OK?

This is an important conversation. Would you like someone to be included in the conversation?

## 2 Engage in truth-telling about the condition

Assess current level of understanding regarding the specific health condition

Ask what they would like to know about their health condition

Tailor information to the patient and their clinical scenario

To make sure we are on the same page, can you tell me your understanding of what's happening with your health regarding \_\_\_\_\_ condition at the moment?

Do you want to know more about your current health condition and what might happen in the future?

Your current condition is \_\_\_\_\_ and this could limit your life by \_\_\_\_\_

## 3 Explore patients' values and preferences

Explore what matters to the patient

Ask if and how they want to be involved in decision-making

Is there anyone you want to be involved in making decisions?

What 3 things are currently most important in your life?

What does quality of life mean to you?

What role do you want to play in making decisions about your treatment and care?

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## Define the decision that needs to be made

Clearly define the decision that needs to be made

Explain what the time frame is for this decision and why

Invite patients who defer decision-making to their healthcare team to still receive some details about the treatment and care options

Now that we have discussed your health condition, and your values and preferences, it's time for us to think about what to do next.

The decision we need to make is \_\_\_\_\_, and it is best if we can make a decision (*insert time frame*) due to \_\_\_\_\_

I'm happy to share my views and help you reach a good decision. Before I do, would you like more details about the options?

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## Outline the options and pros and cons

Explain the options and the benefits, risks, unknowns of each option

Discuss the likelihood that these benefits or harms will occur

Equally explain the positive and negative features of each option

Explain any trade-offs

This treatment may extend your life by \_\_\_\_\_ (*time*), but there is higher chance of \_\_\_\_\_ (*symptom/side effect*)

We know from good research that \_\_ in 100 people will...

For you, this may mean you won't be able to \_\_\_\_\_ or you will have to...

Many people find this treatment difficult because...

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## Make the decision together

Clarify how each option fits with the patients values and preferences

Summarise what you have heard and provide a clinical recommendation

Check the person has understood the information you have provided

With all I've said, which option do you feel most comfortable with?

Are you clear about what the decision we have made today means for you?

You think the best option is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_  
Is this right?

Do you want more time to think about it, and we can talk again later?

## 7 Determine the next steps and close conversation

Formulate a plan

Affirm your commitment to the person

Check whether there are any unanswered questions or concerns

How does this plan sound to you?

I will do all I can to help you get the best possible care that is right for you.

Based on our conversation, I think the following activities should be completed...

Is there anything unclear, or something you would like to go over again, ask or talk about?



Record the decision made, and the rationale provided by the person in your clinical notes

## Communication tips and skills

Skills used in shared decision-making will complement those you already have in communication, therapeutic relationship-building and evidence-based practice.

Create a respectful, caring, and empowering environment, so patients and their families feel comfortable participating in the conversation.

Use active listening (listening, understanding, responding, and reflecting on what is being said).

Explain information in a way that is clear, honest and unbiased.

Use simple, non-medical jargon when explaining things.

Offer for an interpreter to be present for people with language or hearing barriers.

Consider the patient's cultural background and ask if there are any specific needs they have.

Provide information in small segments.

Consider the patient's level of health literacy, language and cognitive impairments, determining the type, amount and speed of information to provide

Pause to allow participation from patients and their loved one/s.

Invite loved one/s to participate when appropriate.

Normalise and explore emotions, and allow silence.

Check the person has understood the information you have provided by asking open ended questions.