

# 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 patients or carers to support their involvement in shared decision-making.



### What is shared decision-making?

Shared decision-making is a process where the patient and healthcare professional make a health decision together. It involves discussing the available treatment and care options, reviewing the benefits, risks, and unknowns of each option, and considering the patients' values, preferences, and circumstances. Shared decision-making leads to better-quality decisions and is a hallmark for good clinical practice and person-centered care.

### Why is shared decision-making important?

People diagnosed with serious health conditions often face many 'preference sensitive' decisions. For example, decisions about treatment that may prolong length of life but reduce quality of life, or impact the ability to spend time at home. Shared decision-making is especially important for patients with serious health conditions nearing the end of life, to support them in making informed choices in the context of prognostic uncertainty and reduced survival time.

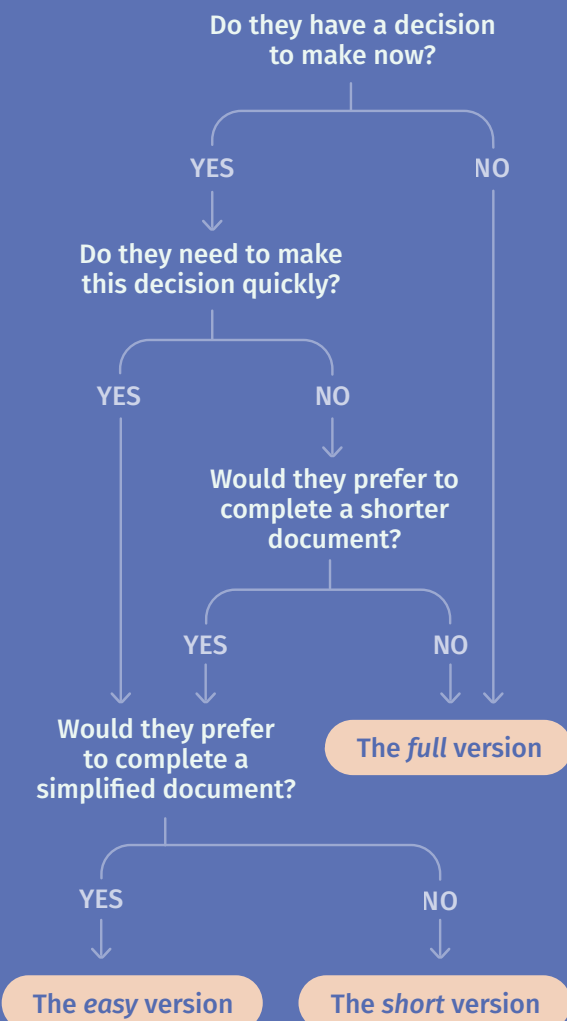
### What is the Care Companion?

The *Care Companion* is a patient decision aid that supports shared decision-making for people with serious health conditions. It is a non-legal document that can be introduced by patients, carers or healthcare professionals, helping all involved to:

- Understand the patient's health condition
- Understand what is important to the patient
- Explore the benefits, risks and unknowns of treatment options
- Select the best option based on what is important to the patient

# Which version of the Care Companion should be used?

There are three versions of the *Care Companion*: the full version, short version and easy 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 what it is and how it can help.

**Identify** the most appropriate healthcare professional to lead the conversation. Often, this will be the patient's doctor or nurse practitioner.

**Schedule** a suitable appointment to complete the *Care Companion*. It may be useful to provide a copy to the patient in advance to allow time for reflection about the role they would like to play in decision-making, what is important to them, and who else they would like to include in the conversation.



### 2 complete

**Before the clinical encounter**, ensure that a printed or electronic version of the *Care Companion* is available. If the patient received a copy in advance, encourage them to bring it along and prompt them to share it with you.

**During the clinical encounter**, complete each section of the *Care Companion*. Use plain language to describe the decision and the benefits, risks, and unknowns of each available and realistic treatment option, helping patients to consider them from a personal view.

**After the clinical encounter**, encourage the patient to keep their *Care Companion* and share with those close to them.



### 3 enact

**Address** any follow-on actions identified.

**Document** a short summary of the conversation and any decisions made in the patient's medical record.

**If their condition changes or they have another decision to make** a new *Care Companion* can be completed or additional pages or resources can be accessed by clicking [here](#).