

Shared Decision Making

What is shared decision making?

Shared decision making is a key component of patient-centered health care. It is a process in which clinicians and patients work together to make decisions and select tests, treatments and care plans based on clinical evidence that balances risks and expected outcomes with patient preferences and values.

When patients engage in shared decision making they...

- **learn about their health** and understand their health conditions
- **recognize that a decision needs to be made** and are informed about the options
- **understand the pros and cons** of different options
- **have the information and tools** needed to evaluate their options
- **are better prepared to talk** with their health care provider
- **collaborate with their health care team** to make a decision right for them
- **are more likely to follow through** on their decision

What Providers Say About the Value of Shared Decision Making

- *Patients are more knowledgeable and better prepared for dialogue*
- *Helps the patient understand what we are trying to do*
- *Builds a lasting and trusting relationship*
- *Both physicians and patients are very satisfied*

Source: Adapted from Shared Decision Making video produced by Lakeview Hospital and Stillwater Medical Group. © 2013. Used with permission

Why is shared decision making important?

In many situations, there is no single “right” health care decision because choices about treatment, medical tests, and health issues come with pros and cons. Shared decision making is especially important in these types of situations:

- when there is more than one reasonable option, such as for screening or a treatment decision
- when no one option has a clear advantage
- when the possible benefits and harms of each option affect patients differently

What is the benefit of shared decision making?

Shared decision making helps providers and patients agree on a health care plan. When patients participate in decision making and understand what they need to do, they are more likely to follow through.

How does health IT help shared decision making?

Health IT tools such as interactive decision aids, patient portals, personal health records, and secure electronic messaging can help with shared decision making. For example, patients can access decision aids and relevant patient education materials via a patient portal and communicate with their health care team about the decision via secure messaging. Practices can build triggers into the EHR to remind providers to give patients a decision aid.

Introducing Shared Decision Making to Patients: Suggested Language for Providers

- *Sometimes things in medicine aren't as clear as most people think. Let's work together so we can come up with the decision that's right for you.*
- *People have different goals and concerns. As you think about your options, what's important to you?*
- *Do you want to think about this decision with anyone else? Someone who might be affected by the decision? Someone who might help sort things out?*

Source: *Six Steps of Shared Decision Making*.
© 2012 by Informed Medical Decisions Foundation. Used with permission

Tips for Shared Decision Making

The following six steps will help providers with shared decision making. They are adapted from the Informed Medical Decisions Foundation.¹

1. **Invite the patient to participate:** Inviting patients to participate lets them know that they have options and that their goals and concerns are a key part of the decision making process.
2. **Present options:** Patients need to know the available options.

3. **Provide information on benefits and risks:** Provide balanced information based on the best available scientific evidence. Check back with patients to be sure they understand.
4. **Assist patients in evaluating options based on their goals and concerns:** To understand patients' preferences, ask them what is important to them and what they are concerned about.
5. **Facilitate deliberation and decision making:** Let patients know they have time to think things over, and ask them what else they need to know or do before they feel comfortable making a decision.
6. **Assist patients to follow through on the decision:** Lay out the next steps for patients, check for understanding, and discuss any possible challenges with carrying out the decision.

Selected Resources

Decision Aids

Decision aids for a variety of health issues are available at no cost from:

- [Mayo Clinic](#)
- [Ottawa Hospital Research Institute](#)

Toolkits and Provider Education Resources

These resources offer step-by-step implementation guidelines and skills training:

- [Decision Support Toolkit](#)
(Dartmouth Center for Shared Decision Making)
- [Implementation Toolkit](#)
(Ottawa Hospital Research Institute)
- [Decision Support as a Clinical Skill Toolkit](#)
(Dartmouth Center for Shared Decision Making)

Patient Resources

(from Informed Medical Decisions Foundation)

Video: [What is Medical Shared Decision Making?](#)

Accompanying patient visit guide: [I Wish I had Asked that!](#)

¹ Source: *Six Steps of Shared Decision Making*. © 2012 by Informed Medical Decisions Foundation. Adapted and used with permission.