



# Shared Decisionmaking: Improving Patient Safety, Education, and Empowerment

## What is it?

Shared decision making is the process of engaging with patients and families to make health care decisions together. It includes exploring and comparing the benefits and risks of each option within a clinical decision through meaningful conversations about what matters most to the patient.

## Why is it important?

Shared decision making is an important approach to engaging patients in their own care. It allows patients to better understand their options for care and to make a decision that is both supported by medical evidence and consistent with their values and preferences.

When patients participate in shared decision making, they are more likely to understand their care plan and more likely to follow through.

## How can I get started?

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has a five-step process for shared decision making, the SHARE Approach, available online at <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/education/curriculum-tools/shareddecisionmaking/index.html>. This Web page links to SHARE Approach tools, such as tips, sample talking points, and implementation guidance, as well as information on webinars and a SHARE Approach workshop. In addition, decision aids are useful in shared decision making, and there are publicly available decision aids for many clinical problems.

## Will this add time to patient visits?

No, shared decision making does not add time to visits or require new scheduling protocols, as long as you are willing to embrace new methods for handling patient visits.

## Do I need any special materials?

Decision aids are a valuable tool in implementing shared decision making, and many are freely available.

## What providers are saying

“We have found that when we use shared decision making, we increase our patients’ comfort level with their care plan because we decide on it together.”

—Director at a university student health center

“I wish I had another 20 years to practice this way.”

—Retiring doctor

## What patients are saying

“When I went to the health center, I wanted my doctor to give me an antibiotic, but once I understood the risks and benefits of taking an antibiotic for my infection, I decided I didn’t want to take it.”

