

Preparing for a Serious Illness Conversation

A GUIDE FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Suggested patient language and questions:

Your health care team likes to plan for the future while people are doing okay. People who think through what is important to them and what their wishes are often feel less anxious, more at peace, and stronger. It will also help prepare your loved ones to make decisions for you if you can't make them at some point in the future. Knowing what you want will ease the burden on your family of making hard decisions for you if you cannot speak for yourself.

At your next scheduled visit

I would like to talk with you about your health, what might be ahead and what things are important to you.

- Is it OK with you to talk about those things next time we meet? (refer to Clinician guide for possible responses if they decline) <https://www.bc-cpc.ca/cpc/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SIC-Reference-Guide-for-Interprofessional-Clinicians.pdf?pdf=SICReferenceGuideforInterprofessionalClinicians>
- If you have legal documents such as My Voice, an Advance Directive or Representation Agreement, please bring those with you. Only documents about your health are needed, so you don't need to bring your will
- Who else would you like to have present?
- Where would you like to be?
- What time of day is best for this type of conversation?
- What do you want your family to know?
- Have you talked to your family about what you want shared about your health? i.e. on social media?

Talking about the future won't change your ongoing care

Talking about the future won't change the plans you have made about your treatment, unless, of course, you want to. We will keep providing the best care possible. Also, you can always change your mind.

I understand that your wishes may change over time

With your permission, this is one of many conversations. I know that you may have other questions or concerns in the future and your health care team will keep being here to support you.

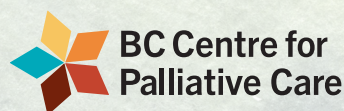
Preparing for the conversation

Below are some things to think about before the conversation. Choose which questions you think would be most relevant for consideration

- What would you like to know about your health and what might be ahead?
- What kind of information would help you make decisions about your future?
- What is most important for you to have a good quality of life?
- Are there any traditional practices important to you?
- What worries you about your changing health?
- Are there any kinds of medical care you do not want?
- Who do you want to make decisions if you can't speak for yourself?



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First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Serious Illness Conversation Guide

ADAPTED VERSION - 2019

CONVERSATION FLOW

PATIENT-TESTED LANGUAGE

1. Set up up the conversation

- Introduce purpose
- Prepare for future decisions
- Ask permission
- Ensure the right people are present

*"How are you feeling today? ____ Can we talk about your future health? — is this okay?"
"I am afraid I might forget something. Is it OK with you if I use this guide and take notes during our talk?"*

2. Assess understanding and preferences

*"What do you think about what's happening with your health right now?"
"How much **information** about your health would you like from me?"*

3. Share prognosis

- Frame as a "wish... worry", "hope...worry" statement
- Allow silence, explore emotion

*"This is my understanding of where things are at right now..."
Uncertain: "I'm worried that your health could change quickly, and I think it is important to prepare for that possibility." OR
Time: "I wish you were not in this situation, but I am worried that time may be as short as ____ (express as a range, e.g., days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year)." OR
Function: "I hope that this is not the case, but I'm worried that this may be as strong as you will feel, and things might get worse."*

4. Explore key topics

- Goals
- Fears and worries
- Sources of strength
- Dignity question
- Critical abilities
- Tradeoffs
- Family

*"If your health gets worse, what's important to you?"
"When you think about your health worsening what worries you?"
"What gives you strength through the hard times?"
"What do I need to know about you to give you the best care possible?"
"What **abilities** are so important for you, that you can't imagine living without them?"
"If your health does get worse, how much are you willing to go through for the possibility of more time?"
"Is your **family** aware about what is most important to you?" ***Ask only if family is not present.*

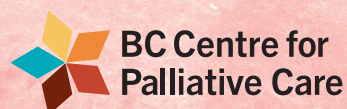
5. Close the conversation

- Summarize
- Make a recommendation
- Ask permission to document information
- Check in with patient
- Affirm commitment

*"This is what I heard you say and what I plan to write down in your chart. ____ Would you like a copy?"
"I **suggest** that we ____ . "How does this plan seem to you?"
"As part of your health care team I will do all I can to help you get the best care possible."
"Is there anything you would like to go over again / ask / talk about?"
"If you think of anything else later, we can revisit this conversation another time."*



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