

# Guide for answering the Choosing Wisely 5 questions



**Choosing Wisely  
Australia**

An initiative of NPS MedicineWise

This document is a generic guide for clinicians, with examples on how best to answer the five Choosing Wisely questions patients may ask you.

1

## Do I really need this test, treatment or procedure?

Suggested responses to patients:

- Explain that these tests may help determine the nature of the patient's condition or rule out other causes.
- Explain that treatments (for example, medicines) and procedures may help to treat the patient's condition.

Ask yourself:

- Are there other treatment options such as lifestyle changes that could be tried and monitored?
- If the test is not urgent or it's an investigation of an incidental finding, could you refer your patient to their GP for the test and follow up?
- Will the results of this test change how you manage the patient's condition and the timeframe of management?

2

## What are the risks?

Suggested responses to patients:

- Explain side effects of the tests and treatments and the impacts this might have on the patient's quality and duration of life.
- Explain if there might be a need for more testing, additional treatments or another procedure.
- Explain any preparations required prior to tests or procedures and any associated risks.



**NSQHS Standard: Partnering with Consumers**

We worked with our Darling Downs Health consumer groups to create this document for our communities.

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**Queensland  
Government**

### 3

## Are there simpler, safer options?

Suggested responses to patients:

- Explain alternatives to the test or treatment. Some tests might be able to be delayed while you wait to see if there are improvements or changes to the patient's condition. You might also be able to recommend lifestyle changes including changes to diet, stress management strategies or exercising, as safe and effective options.
- Following are some websites you may find useful, which can be shared with patients as well:
  - » [www.choosingwisely.org.au/health-professionals](http://www.choosingwisely.org.au/health-professionals)
  - » [www.labtestsonline.org.au/](http://www.labtestsonline.org.au/)

### 4

## What happens if I don't do anything?

Suggested responses to patients:

- Explain to the patient if their condition might get worse – or better – if they don't have the test, treatment or procedure right away. Offer alternative timeframes where appropriate to do so – for example, in some instances you might be able to suggest assessing the patient in a month's time and deciding with them what the next steps should be in their care.

Ask yourself:

- Will having this treatment decrease the duration or severity of the patient's condition or illness?



### 5

## What are the costs?

Suggested responses to patients:

- Be up front with patients about how much money the public system spends on tests, treatments and procedures.
- Explain the costs can be financial, emotional and/or their time.
  - » Below are estimated financial costs of some of the most common tests. The costs may vary due to evening or on-call rates (generally not incurred if a public inpatient).

Test	Cost
Chest X-ray	\$48 - \$96
Limb X-ray	\$44 - \$88
Ultrasound abdomen/pelvis	\$112 - \$226
Ultrasound vascular	\$172 - \$344
CT scan chest/abdomen/pelvis	\$473 - \$947
CT scan joint/limb	\$223 - \$446
MRI head	\$403 - \$806
MRI spine	\$358 - \$716

- Other examples of financial costs could be ongoing medication costs or car parking fees when attending appointments.
- Emotional costs could be the stress of managing a chronic condition, and the impacts treatment might have on a patient's family and on their day-to-day life.
- Time costs could be the time spent attending appointments and receiving treatment, time spent travelling if required, and their recovery time (which may impact on their ability to work, live their life as normal or maintain their quality of life).

Ask yourself:

- Is there an opportunity to consult with the treating team or incoming treating team about what tests might be beneficial?
- If there is a cost to the community, is the cost reasonable or is there a cheaper, safer alternative?