

# ACTION BRIEF

Employer Strategies that Drive Value



## COVID-19

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING

### ACTION STEPS FOR EMPLOYERS:

1. Promote shared decision-making and patient-centered care, especially in relation to COVID-19 testing and treatment.
2. Promote use of the *Choosing Wisely* "5 Questions to Ask your Doctor..."
3. Understand and communicate about the spread of coronavirus.



*"Patients have a big role to play in turning an ordinary healthcare experience into patient-centered care."*

— Stan Schwartz, MD, FACP  
CEO, WellOK Inc., The Northeastern  
Oklahoma Business Coalition on Health

### Easing Stress on Patients, Providers and the Healthcare System

Helping employees make informed decisions about their choices and responsibilities is a growing trend that is especially important in light of COVID-19. Having a tool to guide shared decision-making conversations enables employees to think through their questions and concerns in advance of an office or e-visit so conversations with healthcare providers are efficient and effective.

#### 1. Promote shared decision-making and patient-centered care.

Shared decision-making is a model of patient-centered care that enables people to play a role in the medical decisions that affect their health. It operates under two premises.

**First**, patients armed with evidence-based care knowledge feel empowered to participate in care decisions.

**Second**, clinicians use patient preferences to guide recommendations.

#### Why Is Shared Decision-Making More Important Than Ever During COVID-19?

- ▶ Good information helps people make informed care decisions and manage their anxiety.
- ▶ The impact of COVID-19 varies greatly based on patient age, risk factors, and personal environment.

#### 5 QUESTIONS to Ask Your Doctor Before You Get Any Test, Treatment, or Procedure

- 1 **Do I really need this test or procedure?** Medical tests help you and your doctor or other health provider decide how to treat a problem. And medical procedures help to actually treat it.
- 2 **What are the risks?** Will there be side effects? What are the chances of getting results that aren't accurate? Could that lead to more testing or another procedure?
- 3 **Are there simpler, safer options?** Sometimes all you need to do is make lifestyle changes, such as eating healthier food or exercising more.
- 4 **What happens if I don't do anything?** Ask if your condition might get worse — or better — if you don't have the test or procedure right away.
- 5 **How much does it cost?** Ask if there are less-expensive tests, treatments or procedures, what your insurance may cover, and about generic drugs instead of brand-name drugs.

Use these 5 questions to talk to your doctor about which tests, treatments, and procedures you need — and which you don't need

Some medical tests, treatments, and procedures provide little benefit. And in some cases, they may even cause harm.

Talk to your doctor to make sure you end up with the right amount of care — not too much and not too little.

[www.choosingwisely.org/patient-resources](http://www.choosingwisely.org/patient-resources)  
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- ▶ Prudent use of care and resources is essential with a system under extreme stress.
  - ▶ There is no known immunization or treatment available.
  - ▶ Possible treatments featured in the media are based on poor-quality studies.
  - ▶ Everyone must take action to limit virus spread.
- #### 2. Encourage use of the *Choosing Wisely* "5 Questions to Ask your Doctor..."

Encouraging employees to use the "5 questions" developed by the *Choosing Wisely* campaign to equip patients to have meaningful conversations about evidence-based standards of care and share decision-making responsibilities.

*“There’s never been a better time for clear effective communication between employees and workplace leaders. COVID-19 is unique and requires everyone to work together as a team.”*

— Scott Conard, MD DABFM, FAAFP  
 Founder of Converging Health

Choosing Wisely focuses on care that is:

- ▶ Supported by evidence
- ▶ Not duplicative of other tests or procedures
- ▶ Most effective and least risky
- ▶ Truly necessary
- ▶ Informed by patient needs and preferences

Printable wallet cards featuring the “5 Questions” are available at [choosing-wisely.org](http://choosing-wisely.org), along with a large library of provider- and patient-friendly materials on dozens of healthcare topics.

### 3. Communicate about the spread of COVID-19.

The practical aspects of how organizations can take action are complex. The graphic below shows how the virus is spread. A detailed explanation is available by clicking on the first link under “Employer Resources.”

## CHOOSING WISELY COVID-19: Bringing the “5 Questions” to Life

*(Simulated conversation with a healthy 30-year-old patient; not intended to be medical advice)*

Based on your symptoms, the doctor ordered a COVID-19 nasal swab test. The test was positive. You’ve heard that hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin might help you get better faster. The principles of *Choosing Wisely* can inform your decision.

**1. Are these medications likely to help me?** Evidence that these medications work is based on very small, low-quality studies. Because you are in good health and age 30, your chance of serious illness requiring hospitalization is very low.

**2. What are the risks?** These drugs do not often cause serious side effects when given for a short time but can

interact with one of your current medications.

### 3. What are simpler, safer options?

The best option is to stay home, rest, push fluids, and use acetaminophen for fever or body aches. If symptoms worsen and you begin to have trouble breathing, call our urgent care line right away.

### 4. What happens if I do nothing?

It’s highly likely you’ll get better with home care.

**5. How much do the drugs cost?** The cost is about \$20-\$30. Even though they are affordable and unlikely to cause harm, I do not recommend them for you at this time.

*“Tools like the ‘5 Questions’ equip employees to take part in their care. When coupled with promoting access to virtual care options, stress on employers, employees and the healthcare system is lessened.”*

— Michael Thompson  
 National Alliance President & CEO

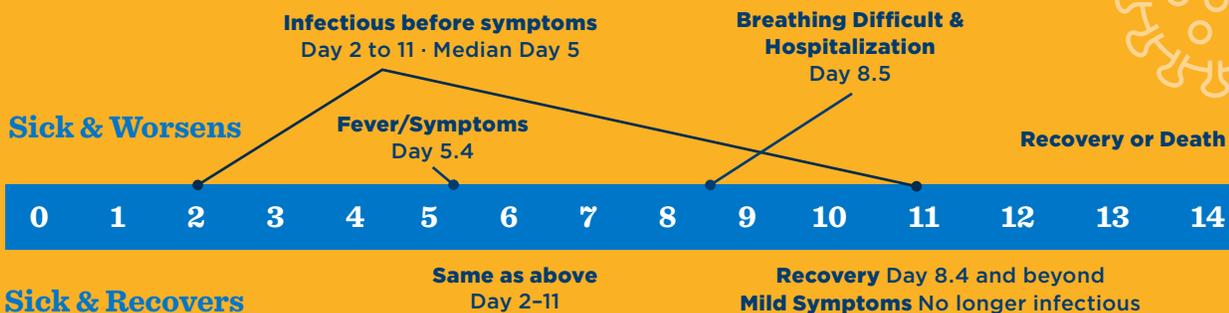
## RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS:

- [National Alliance COVID-19 resource page](#)
- [Choosingwisely.org](http://Choosingwisely.org)
- [Covidactnow.org](http://Covidactnow.org)
- Local public health departments

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

National Alliance acknowledges support from Drs. Scott Conard, Chuck Cutler, and Stan Schwartz by way of clinical expertise to produce this *Action Brief*.

## UNDERSTANDING THE SPREAD OF THE COVID-19



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