

# Provide Choices And Ask Yes/No Questions To Support Communication



## Description

Anticipate what the person might need or want to tell you. Then ask yes/no questions and give choices so they can communicate their message with eye-gaze, gestures or words.

- Use closed-ended questions to get a 'yes' or 'no' response (e.g., Are you comfortable? Do you want water?)
- Provide choices to obtain a specific response.

## Who May Benefit?

To provide people with the opportunity to express their wants, needs, preferences and decisions. This strategy may benefit people who have difficulty hearing, understanding or expressing themselves, including those who are speechless due to mechanical support (e.g., intubation) and those whose speech is difficult to understand.

## Tips

- Consider how you can obtain information by asking only yes-no questions. For example, instead of asking "Why didn't you finish your lunch?" ask a series of questions like "Did your lunch taste ok?" "Was it hard to chew?" "Are you still hungry?" "Do you want some yogurt?"
- Provide two or three possible objects, pictures or printed words as options so they can select by looking, pointing or speaking (e.g., Do you want a blanket or a sheet?)
- Options can also be presented while holding up the right hand for one options and the left hand for the other.
- A larger number of options can be provided using a communication board.
- You can read a longer list of options once; then go through the list again for the person to choose their desired response.
- Remember that it takes extra time for some people to process and respond to a question. Count slowly to 5 before repeating the question or asking another question.
- If responses seem unreliable, check that the person understands simple yes-no questions like "is your name Susan?" If not, you may need to add picture cues or gestures to support comprehension.
- Avoid double negative questions like "Did you not want me to open the window?"

### MESSAGE IN

- "Did your lunch taste OK?"
- "Do you want an apple or an orange?"
- "We have apple, peach and lemon. Do you want apple? Peach?"

### MESSAGE OUT

- The person uses facial expressions, gestures or words to indicate 'yes' or 'no'.
- They may say, look at or point to desired object, picture or printed word.

### CHECKING IN

- Confirm understanding by mirroring their response.
- "It looks like you want an apple."
- "You do want your blanket. I will get it."

