

SNAP: 5-stage intervention – in brief



Support Needs
Approach for Patients

What is the Support Needs Approach for Patients (SNAP)?

The Support Needs Approach for Patients (SNAP) is a health care intervention which seeks to enable person-centred care for adult patients. SNAP uses an evidence-based validated tool, known as the SNAP Tool, to help patients identify and express their support needs which are then discussed with their health care professional.

The SNAP Tool comprises a set of questions relating to broad areas of need in which patients commonly say they require support. The tool is short and simple to use for both patients and health care professionals.

There are three versions of the SNAP Tool: (1) one for adult patients with predominantly chronic or progressive conditions (15 questions: the original SNAP Tool), (2) one for those with predominantly mental health conditions (17 questions: the SNAP-MH Tool), and (3) one for those with hearing loss (15 questions: the SNAP-HL Tool). A further version is in development for those with predominantly chronic or progressive conditions in prison settings (14 questions: SNAP-Prisons Tool).

Evidence for the SNAP Tool came from:

- adult patients with chronic/progressive disease
- unpaid/family carers (family/friends who help and support patients)
- and health care professionals (chronic/progressive disease)

Evidence for the SNAP-MH Tool came from:

- adult mental health service users
- unpaid/family carers (family/friends who help and support service users)
- and health care professionals (mental health)

Evidence for the SNAP-HL Tool came from:

- adults with hearing loss

Evidence for the SNAP-Prisons Tool came from:

- current and former prisoners with chronic/progressive disease
- and health care professionals (chronic/progressive disease in prison settings)

SNAP is more than just the tool however: the tool underpins the 5-stage SNAP intervention for use in clinical practice. The SNAP Tool and SNAP-MH Tool (hereafter referred to collectively as ‘the Tool’ or ‘Tools’) can also be used as standalone tools in research studies, or systematic reviews, seeking to identify broad areas of unmet support need in relevant patient groups.

Why do we need SNAP?

Patients have support needs – they also have *unmet* support needs.

Some patients find it difficult to tell health care professionals about their support needs as...

- they are worried about health care professionals' time,
- they are not sure what is appropriate or relevant to tell health care professionals about,
- and they are very aware that health care professionals have things they need to do, or get on with, during an appointment – and the health care professional tends to be “in the driving seat” of consultations.

It's difficult for health care professionals to meet patients' support needs if they don't know what those needs are.

Patients therefore need a means to help them identify and express their support needs to a health care professional – a tool to act as a prompt and help overcome their concerns about sharing their need for support. Such a tool could then help start a needs-led conversation with a health care professional about their unmet support needs and what help and support they might find useful in meeting their needs.

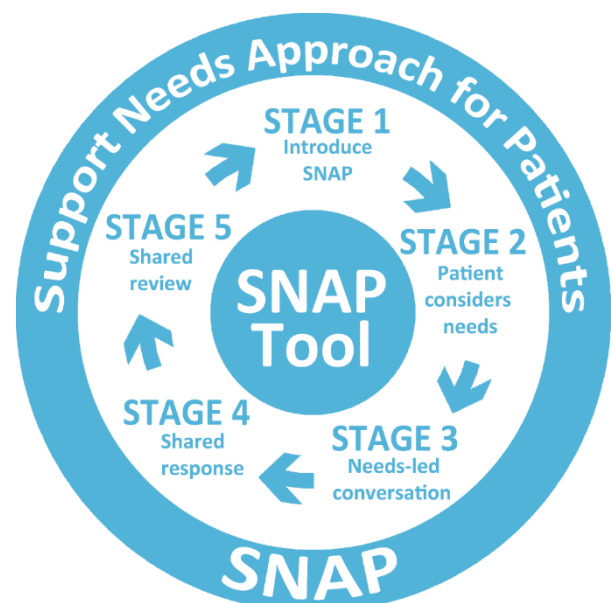
Together, the tool and the needs-led conversation form SNAP: the Support Needs Approach for Patients

What are the five stages of SNAP?

SNAP is a 5-stage person-centred intervention which is facilitated by the health care professional but led by the patient. It seeks to enable person-centred care.

Within SNAP the patient is enabled to say what is most important to them, at that moment in time (their priorities for discussion), and what they feel would help support them. It is person-centred in that at every one of the five stages the patient is at the centre of the activity – they are “*in the driving seat*”:

- Stage 1: SNAP begins when patients are introduced to the Tool
- Stage 2: Patients then use the Tool to consider and indicate the areas in which they need more support – by answering the evidence-based questions
- Stage 3: A needs-led conversation then takes place between the patient and the health care professional using the patient-completed tool, which enables the patient to prioritise and express their individual support needs



- Stage 4: Together, the patient and health care professional then agree on what (further) supportive input would be valuable and create a shared action plan
- Stage 5: A shared review of the patient's support needs is then carried out, by the patient and health care professional, at another point in time

What does the SNAP Tool look like?

The Tool, which underpins SNAP, uses a simple question and tick answer format to ask patients to show which areas they need **more** support with. The Tool makes common areas of support need “visible” – this has been reported as helpful for patients. Patients can indicate whether, or not, they need more support in relation to each broad area of support need.

Here is an extract from the original SNAP Tool...

How are you?
We would like to know what support you need. Please tick the box that best represents your needs now, for each statement below.

Do you need more support with...	No	A little more	Quite a bit more	Do you need more support with...	No	A little more	Quite a bit more
...understanding your illness				...practical help in the home or garden			
...managing your symptoms (including medication and oxygen)				...your personal care (e.g. dressing, washing)			
...dealing with your feelings and worries				...aids or equipment to help you			
...looking after any other physical				...family relationships (including talking			

Which types of patients can SNAP be used with?

Patients and health care professionals have also told us that although the original SNAP Tool was developed initially for patients with advanced COPD, the generic nature of the questions on tool suggests it is relevant for adult patients with **a range of chronic, progressive or non-curative conditions** e.g. heart failure, frail elderly, Parkinson's Disease, stroke etc. This is probably because patients with chronic long-term conditions such as COPD have multiple co-morbidities, therefore the evidence on their support needs is unlikely to relate purely to their COPD but more likely to their support needs in general (and therefore related to all their conditions). Further, the SNAP Tool does not include the term “COPD” or refer specifically to lung symptoms.

We have also worked with mental health service users and clinicians to adapt the SNAP Tool to produce a new version for adults with **mental health conditions**: the SNAP-MH Tool. And a version of the SNAP Tool has been developed for people with hearing loss: the SNAP-HL Tool.

Work is underway to explore using SNAP in **prison settings**: <https://arc-eoe.nihr.ac.uk/research-implementation/research-themes/palliative-and-end-life-care/adapting-support-needs>

Can I use the SNAP Tool in my clinical practice or research?

Yes – but you need a licence. The SNAP Tools are copyrighted. A licence is required for organisations using the tools. You can **request a free licence**, and **access free SNAP training** (mandatory for clinical practice use), via the SNAP website: <https://thesnap.org.uk/>

Further reading

- SNAP in practice implementation:
 - Gardener AC, Ewing G, Deaton C, Farquhar M. Understanding how the Support Needs Approach for Patients (SNAP) enables identification, expression, and discussion of patient support needs: a qualitative study. *Chronic Illness* 2022; 18(4):911-926
 - <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/17423953211047840>
- SNAP in Sweden:
 - Lundh-Hagelin C, Holm M, Axelsson L, Rosén M, Norell T, Suárez Godoy Z, Farquhar M, Ewing G, Gardener C, Årestedt K, Alvariza A. The Support Needs Approach for Patients (SNAP): content validity and response processes from the perspective of patients and nurses in Swedish specialised palliative home care. *BMC Palliat Care* 2025;24:73
 - <https://bmcpalliatcare.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12904-025-01715-4>
- SNAP intervention:
 - <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/blog/new-research-to-help-people-with-copd/170275>
- Validation of SNAP Tool:
 - Gardener AC, Ewing G, Mendonca S, Farquhar M. The Support Needs Approach for Patients (SNAP) Tool: a validation study. *BMJ Open* 2019;9:e032028. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2019-032028
 - <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/9/11/e032028.full.pdf>
- Development of SNAP Tool:
 - Gardener AC, Ewing G, Farquhar M. Enabling patients with advanced Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease to identify and express their support needs to health care professionals: a qualitative study to develop a tool. *Palliative Medicine* 2019;33(6):663-675
 - <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0269216319833559>
- Background evidence for SNAP Tool:
 - Gardener AC, Ewing G, Kuhn I, Farquhar M. Support needs of patients with COPD: a systematic literature search and narrative review. *International Journal of COPD* 2018;13 1021-1035
 - <https://www.dovepress.com/support-needs-of-patients-with-copd-a-systematic-literature-search-and-peer-reviewed-article-COPD>