



Carers Alert Thermometer (CAT)

Frequently Asked Questions

An introduction for people in a caring role

What is the CAT?

The CAT is an 11 question, alert tool to identify any support you may need as someone who provides care to a friend or family member. If you are supporting someone who is considered to be nearing the end of their life, there is an additional question about end of life plans and wishes. The CAT was developed over a 3 year project involving 245 carers and staff from social care and health services. It is being used by several organisations across the UK, and internationally, to support people in their caring role and to look after their own health and well-being.

Who is the CAT designed to be used with?

Adults aged 18+ years old who are providing unpaid care/support to a friend or family member with a long-term, progressive, or terminal illness. A term commonly used to describe this role is 'carer' or 'family carer'. You may not see yourself as a 'carer' but if you support someone in your role as spouse/sibling/parent/daughter/son or friend, you may find it useful to complete the CAT to identify any help or support that may benefit **you**.

What will completing the CAT involve?

The CAT has 11 questions covering two areas: (1) providing support to the person you care for (*the current caring situation*) and (2) for **your** own health and well-being.

The CAT should be discussed and completed together by you and the person who introduced it (the assessor). To identify how urgent each need alert is you will be asked to rate how much you think it will affect your ability to provide care or your own health and well-being using a traffic light system of green (Low), amber (Moderate) and red (High) need. The scores will be added up and the total added to Section 3 on the thermometer and in the total score box. Next, you will be asked to identify which alerts are the most important to you and an agreed action plan is written in Section 4. The plan will include what next steps will be taken and who will be responsible for them. The last section is to agree a date to review progress.

Storage of the CAT

There is no national guidance on the storage of carer records, so organisations are following their own guidance on how to store the CAT. In some organisations, the carer keeps the CAT at their home and the assessor makes brief notes of the alerts and agreed actions; others have chosen for the assessor to keep it and bring it with them on the next visit. Some organisations let the carer decide what they which option they wish to follow. The person who has introduced the CAT to you will discuss the storage of the CAT with you.

How often would I complete the CAT?

The frequency that the CAT should be completed will depend on the level of alerts identified.

Carers have suggested the CAT should be completed approximately every 3-6 months. When amber or red alerts are identified we recommend that a follow up review is done within the month or sooner, if appropriate.

CAT Research Team Contact Details

- If you would like more information about the CAT study or have any questions or comments about completing the CAT please contact the team at CAT@edgehill.ac.uk
- There is also information available on the CAT website, along with links to sources of information and support for carers at www.edgehill.ac.uk/carers

Please note the research team can only provide information or guidance about the CAT. We are not able to give advice on the appropriate action in response to needs or alerts identified.