



Making a Plan for Your Health Care

PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE MEDICAL DECISIONS

What is an Advance Directive?

An Advance Directive is a written plan about your healthcare wishes and who you want to make decisions for you if you can't. It ensures your voice is heard, even when you can't speak.

Two Main Parts of an Advance Directive

1. **Living Will:** A written statement outlining your preferences for medical treatment in specific situations, such as end-of-life care. For example, it can specify whether you want machines to help you breathe or eat.
2. **Health Care Proxy (Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care):** Names a trusted person (also known as a healthcare agent or surrogate) who will make medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so.

Who Can Help You

- Family Members
- Friends
- Doctors
- Nurses
- Social Workers
- Advocates

Why is Advance Care Planning Important?

Advance care planning allows you to:

- **Maintain Control:** Ensure your health care decisions align with your values and wishes, even if you cannot speak for yourself.
- **Reduce Burden:** Ease the stress and uncertainty for your family and loved ones during difficult times.

- **Improve Communication:** Open conversations with your family and health care providers about your goals and preferences.
- **Promote Peace of Mind:** Gain comfort knowing your wishes will be honored.

Key Steps in Advance Care Planning

1. **Reflect on Your Values and Preferences:** Consider what is most important to you regarding your health, quality of life, and end-of-life care.
2. **Learn About Advance Directives:** Understand the different types of advance directives and how they can be used to document your wishes.
3. **Choose a Health Care Proxy:** Select a trusted person to make health care decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so.
4. **Discuss Your Wishes:** Talk openly and honestly with your family, loved ones, and health care providers about your values, preferences, and advance directives.
5. **Document Your Decisions:** Complete an advance directive form and share it with your health care proxy, family, and health care providers.
6. **Review and Update Regularly:** Periodically review your advance directive and update it as your values, preferences, or health status change.

Key Vocabulary Terms

Term	Definition	Example
Advance Care Planning	The process of planning for future medical care.	Discussing your wishes with family is a key part of advance care planning.
Advance Directive	A legal document that communicates your healthcare wishes.	A living will is a type of advance directive.
Living Will	A written statement of your wishes for medical treatment.	My living will states that I do not want life support if I am in a coma.
Health Care Proxy/Agent	A person you choose to make healthcare decisions for you when you can't.	I appointed my sister as my health care proxy.
Life Support	Medical treatments that keep you alive.	Life support can include ventilators and feeding tubes.
CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)	Emergency procedure to restore breathing and heart function.	CPR is used when someone's heart has stopped.
Comfort Care	Medical care focused on relieving pain and suffering.	Comfort care aims to improve quality of life.
Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order	A medical order not to perform CPR.	A DNR order is respected by healthcare providers.
Do Not Intubate (DNI) Order	A medical order not to insert a breathing tube.	A DNI order is different from a DNR order.
Out-of-Hospital DNR	A DNR order valid outside of a hospital setting.	An out-of-hospital DNR allows paramedics to respect your wishes.