

Living Will, Power of Attorney, Health Care Proxy for patients over 18 years of age

What are advance medical directives?

They are legal papers. It tells others how you would like to be cared for if you are not able to make decisions for yourself.

- Advanced directives help protect your right to make medical choices that might affect your life.
- They help your family make decisions for you if you are not able to do so. They also give your doctor guidelines for your care.

What are my rights?

- It is your right to accept or refuse medical care. Advance directives can help protect this right.
- As a patient, you have a right to know about advance directives. There are staff members who can help explain and answer your questions if needed.

There are two kinds of advance directives.

You can have either one or both kinds of advance directives. Both are legal documents.

1. Power of attorney for healthcare.

You must name a health care agent. This person will make decisions for you if you are not able to do so. The health care agent should be someone you know well and trust. They will make decisions for you only if you cannot do so. Your doctor decides if you can make decisions or not.

2. Living wills.

This tells your doctor and others about the kind of health care you want when you are ill and cannot make decisions. The living will takes effect **only** if you are dying or are in deep state of unconsciousness or coma. This is known as a persistent vegetative state. Two doctors or your doctor and a licensed psychologist can decide this.

What should I think about when I am making the directives?

Let your values be your guide. Think about what is important to you. If you could not speak for yourself, would it be important for you to:

- Have made your own decisions and not burden your family with tough decisions?
- Act within your religious beliefs?
- Prolong life, even if there is little chance of recovery?
- Be with your family and loved ones at death?
- Die without pain and suffering?
- Donate an organ or part of your body?

What is covered in this directive?

You can limit or refuse things that would keep you alive if there is little or no chance of recovery.

Make your limits known about:

- CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). A procedure that tries to bring breathing and a heartbeat back once it has stopped.
- IV treatment (intravenous). A catheter put in your vein. It gives medicine, fluid and nutrition.
- Feeding tube. A tube that is put in the nose, throat or stomach. This tube gives nutrition, food and water when you can no longer eat or drink.
- Respirator/Ventilator. A machine that breathes for you when you are not able to breathe on your own.
- Dialysis. A machine to remove harmful substances from your blood when your kidneys are failing.
- Pain relief. A plan of care to give or not give medicine and treatment to help with pain.
- Other treatments or procedures.

How do I make advance directives?

1. Check state laws about living wills and durable powers of attorney for health care.
2. Put your wishes in writing, using an approved form. Be as specific as you can.
3. Sign and date your advance directives with two witnesses who are not related to you.
4. Keep a card in your wallet to let others know you have advance directives. The card should tell others where to find the papers.
5. Talk with your family and friends about your advance directives. Give a copy to anyone who might be notified in an emergency.
6. Review your advance directives often and make changes as needed. Update copies you have given to others.
7. Make copies and give them to your health care agent, your doctor and any other staff giving you care.

What if I change my mind?

As long as you are able to make decisions, you can cancel your advance directives. You need to tell your doctor and health care agent.

No one else can cancel your advance medical directive; unless they can prove you were not thinking clearly when you created the living will.

Who can help me make an advanced directive?

- A social worker or chaplain (while in the hospital).
- A lawyer.
- A hospital, hospice, home health agency or long-term care facility.
- Your state attorney general's office.
- Choice In Dying, 200 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.