

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING GUIDE

If we know your choices for future health care,
we are able to respect them



This guide aims to assist you in thinking about your future healthcare choices. Advance Care Planning helps those closest to you make healthcare decisions on your behalf should you be unable to make these decisions for yourself. This may involve thinking and talking about complex and sensitive issues.

You can use this guide to write down thoughts or questions that you may have about advance care planning.

This Advance Care Planning Guide is best used together with the Advance Care Planning Information Pamphlet. You can also refer to this guide during discussions with your doctor, family and other health care providers (such as a Respecting Patient Choices consultant). Once you have completed this guide you may wish to speak with these people about completing an Advance Care Plan and/or nominating someone who will be able to make the health care choices that you would want should you be unable to make them for yourself.

Advance Care Planning ensures your future medical treatment is in safe hands.



Your past experiences of health.

Your past experiences and current beliefs can shape your views about medical treatment. You may have had an experience with a family member or friend who was faced with a decision about medical care near the end of life. This may have been a difficult experience and led you to have certain views regarding what kinds of medical treatments you may or may not want in the future.

Your thoughts...

Have you or anyone else you know had a positive or a difficult experience with health care?

Are there things that you wish could have been done differently?

Are there any medical treatments that you have experienced or seen others experience that influences your views?

Do you have any questions about these medical treatments that you wish to ask your doctor?

Your current health.

At present, you may be healthy or experiencing health problems. It is worth thinking about your health while keeping in mind the things that you value, goals you may want to achieve and the place of spirituality in your life.

Your thoughts...

Thinking about your health now, list any significant health problems that concern you.

How may the qualities of your life that you value, and your beliefs about religion or spirituality, affects your choice of medical treatments?

Your future health.

You may have thoughts on the kinds of health problems that could affect you in the future. The medical treatments that you choose may also be based upon your values and goals.

Your thoughts...

What short or long-term goals do you have?

If you are receiving medical treatment how might the treatment help or hinder you in accomplishing these goals?

Who should make decisions?

It is a good idea to think about whom you would want to make decisions about your health if you are unable to make these decisions for yourself. Many people select a close family member, but you can pick any adult whom you think could best represent you. You can legally nominate someone for this role (the form for this differs in each State and Territory).

The person that you choose needs to be:

- aged 18 or over
- trusted to follow your values and instructions
- willing to accept this responsibility
- available to take on the role if required
- able to make decisions in stressful situations.

Your thoughts...

How would you want decisions regarding your medical treatment to be made if you could not make them for yourself?

Who would you want to make these decisions for you?

Would you also like your family and/or other members from your community (e.g. religious advisor) involved?

How to make decisions?

It helps to plan for situations where you may:

- Become unexpectedly incapable of making your own decisions, and
- It is clear you will have little or no recovery, and
- The injury or loss of function is significant.

Such situations might arise because of an injury to the brain from an accident, a stroke, or a slowly progressive disease like Alzheimer's disease.

To plan for this type of situation, some people state: “If I’m going to be a vegetable, let me go.” Or “Don’t keep me alive on machines.” Or “I want everything”. While these remarks are a beginning, they need to be more specific to guide decision-making. Clearer statements such as “I do want/do not want treatments that can keep me alive” can assist in planning. Your doctor can help you understand this. It is important to then discuss these choices with those closest to you.

Your thoughts...

Write down the aspects of your life that you value. This may include your independence, activities you enjoy, communicating with your loved ones etc.

If you could no longer participate in these aspects of your life, are there any circumstances where you would regard life-prolonging treatments to be overly burdensome and prefer them to be stopped or withheld?

To do.

- Discuss your thoughts with those close to you: your family, substitute decision maker, your GP and other involved health care providers.
- Ask your doctor any questions that you may have regarding your health and medical treatments.
- Legally nominate your substitute decision maker for medical treatment on a medical enduring power of attorney form (or equivalent) and advise this person/these people.
- Your doctor can witness this form.
- Complete an Advance Care Plan or Advance Directive, which can formally record your choices.
- Give copies of your Advance Care Plan or Advance Directive and medical enduring power of attorney (or equivalent) to your doctor/s, hospital, other health care providers, your substitute decision maker, family and those involved in your care.
- Discuss any changes to your choices as soon as you think of them and also make these changes to your forms.

What next?

How do you make sure that your choices will be respected? First make sure that you talk about them with your doctor, family, friends and significant others. You can then put your choices in writing in the form of an Advance Care Plan or Advance Directive. Ask your doctor about this or a Respecting Patient Choices Consultant can assist you.

You can also find more information on advance care planning by contacting a Respecting Patient Choices office or by going to the RPC website: www.respectingpatientchoices.org.au

For more information about this FREE service

please call our help desk on 5226 7006 between 9am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday

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