



Advance Care Planning: An Overview

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You have a right to make your own medical decisions at all stages of your adult life. **Advance Care Planning** is a process of discussing, preparing and documenting your wishes and/or preferences. Decisions are based on your personal beliefs and values.

Advance Care Planning discussions include:

- Medical Preferences on:
 - pain management
 - artificial nutrition and hydration
 - intubation
 - resuscitation
 - dialysis
 - antibiotics
 - any treatments you would not want
- Where do you wish to be cared for specifically at end of life:
 - Home
 - Community
- What is important to you at end of life:
 - Having family/friends visit often
 - Being pain free
 - Dignity
 - Quality of Life
 - Having closure
 - Religious/Spiritual preferences
- Who do you trust to make decisions and follow your wishes if you cannot communicate them yourself
 - Spouse
 - Children
 - Friend

The topics listed above can be very difficult to think about, much less discuss with your loved ones. Please remember advance care planning is an ongoing process of discussion and you don't have to make all your decisions right now, but discussing what you are thinking in

regards to the topics above will assist you and your loved ones in caring for you both now and at end of life.

Advance Care Planning can involve discussing questions, concerns and preferences with many different people including:

- loved ones (trusted family, friends, children, etc.)
- physicians
- social worker
- lawyer
- financial advisor
- religious/spiritual advisor

Tips to beginning the process and discussion of Advance Care Planning:

- Confront and understand any fears you might have associated with end of life. This will help you determine what is important to you at the end of life, as well as help you plan to resolve the fear.
- Speak openly and honestly about your beliefs, values, hopes and fears.
- Ask questions to health care professionals about what to expect in regards to your health situation.
- Research your care options and available resources (Community Care Facilities, Hospice, etc)

Under state law you will be the person making your decisions as long as you are determined to have capacity and understanding about the decisions you are making. Physicians and/or the State will determine your capacity. If you are determined to not have capacity or ability to communicate your wishes your agent or proxy would assume responsibility for your decisions. You may not select any members of your health care team to be your agent or proxy.

When selecting person(s) to make your decisions you may want to consider choosing someone who is:

- responsible
- trustworthy to carry out your wishes as expressed
- shares your values and beliefs about medical care and dying
- willing to accept responsibility and be available should decisions need to be made.

Important Reminders:

- You may change your wishes at any time.
- To ensure your wishes are adhered to, make sure to have ongoing discussions with your loved ones and/or agent or proxy.

Internet Forms and Fact Sheets:

- Advance Health Care Directive, Fact Sheet for Consumers
<http://ag.ca.gov/consumers/pdf/CCCCFSAHCD.pdf>
- Form 3-1, Advance Health Care Directive
http://www.calhospital.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/forms_3.pdf
- Family Caregiver Alliance, Fact Sheet: Legal Issues in Planning for Incapacity
<https://www.caregiver.org/legal-planning-incapacity>

Advance Care Planning Internet Resources:

- Family Caregiver Alliance www.caregiver.org
- Caring Connections www.caringinfo.org
- Coalition for Compassionate Care of California <http://coalitionccc.org/>
- Center for Health Care Decisions <http://chcd.org/>
- Aging with Dignity, 5 Wishes www.agingwithdignity.org

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