

What is advance care planning?

If you were very unwell, and not able to communicate your preferences for care to others, who would you want to speak for you? What would you want them to say?

Advanced illness or serious injury can sometimes mean that people cannot make their own decisions about health care. This can happen to people of all ages, and especially towards end of life.

Writing an Advance Care Plan lets you say what you would want, if you are ever unable to communicate for yourself.

Benefits for you and the people who care for you

Advance care planning:

- helps to ensure that your preferences about health care are known and respected if you are too unwell to speak for yourself
- benefits those who are close to you. Research has shown that families of people who have done advance care planning have less anxiety and stress when asked to make important healthcare decisions for other people.

MAKING HEALTHCARE DECISIONS FOR OTHERS CAN BE DIFFICULT. AN ADVANCE CARE PLAN CAN GIVE PEACE OF MIND AND COMFORT AS PREFERENCES ARE CLEAR, UNDERSTOOD AND RESPECTED.

What do I need to do?

Be open

- Think and talk about your values, beliefs and preferences for current and future health care.
- Decide who you would like to speak for you if you become very sick and are not able to speak for yourself. Ask them if they are prepared to be your 'substitute decision-maker'.

They will need to be:

- available (ideally live in the same city or region)
- over the age of 18
- prepared to advocate clearly and confidently on your behalf when talking to your doctors, other health professionals and family members

Depending on your state/territory, you may be able to appoint more than one substitute decision-maker.

Be ready

- Talk about your values, beliefs and preferences with your substitute decision-maker and other people involved in your care, such as family, friends, carers and doctors.
- While you don't have to get help from a health professional when writing your Advance Care Plan, it is a good idea to have your GP and other health professionals involved. They can advise you and help you to document your choices.

There are different legal requirements in different Australian states and territories, so it is a good idea to ask for help. In some states and territories there are important rules regarding who can witness documents for you.

Be heard

- Write your preferences down. You can find information relevant to your state/territory law from advancercareplanning.org.au. Your doctor will also be able to assist you with the form.
- A written Advance Care Plan/Directive will make things easier for your substitute decision-maker(s), if the need ever arises. It will give everyone peace of mind, knowing your preferences are heard and respected.

Make copies and store them with:

- your substitute decision-maker(s)
- your GP/local doctor
- your specialist(s)
- your residential aged care home
- your hospital
- myagedcare.gov.au.

Advance Care Planning Australia

BE OPEN | BE READY | BE HEARD

You don't have to give a copy to each of the above, but make sure your substitute decision-maker and main doctor each has a copy.

- Load your Advance Care Plan/Directive into your 'My Health Record' at myhealthrecord.gov.au
- Review your Advance Care Plan regularly. You should review your plan if there is a change in your health, personal or living situation.

The law and advance care planning

Different states and territories in Australia have different laws on advance care planning. When planning for your own future care, it will be helpful to understand the law in your own state/territory.

See advancecareplanning.org.au for information.

Depending on the state/territory:

- a substitute decision-maker may be legally appointed as an 'agent', 'guardian' or an 'enduring guardian'
- an Advance Care Plan may also be called an 'advance care directive' or an 'advance health directive' and may include a 'refusal of treatment certificate'.

Where can I get more information?

Advance Care Planning Australia:

WWW.ADVANCECAREPLANNING.ORG.AU

NATIONAL ADVISORY HELPLINE: 1300 208 582

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This publication only provides a general summary of the subject matter covered. People should seek professional advice about their specific circumstances. ACPA is not liable for any errors or omission in this publication.