

A GUIDE TO ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

WHAT IS ADVANCE CARE PLANNING?

Advance Care Planning is part of the process that outlines your wishes for medical care if you become unable to make them for yourself. Key elements include considering what matters to you, selecting someone as your health-care agent and documenting your choices in writing. This could include aspects related to life-sustaining treatments, organ donation and special instructions regarding your care.

While we may associate these documents with older individuals or those with serious illnesses, medical emergencies can affect anyone at any time.



WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT ADVANCE CARE PLANNING?

Without those key elements in advance care planning, the health-care providers will look to your closest available family members to make medical decisions on your behalf. It does not automatically fall to a specific person, so the decision-making may fall to a spouse, adult children, parents or other relatives, depending on the situation.

Without clear guidance from you, this can lead to confusion or disagreements among family members and may result in care that doesn't reflect your wishes.

WHY IS ADVANCE CARE PLANNING SO IMPORTANT?



Ensures Your Voice:
Shares your care preferences if you are unable to.



Prevents Confusion:
Clear documentation avoids family and provider disagreements.



Aligns Care with Values:
Guides treatments based on your goals and beliefs.

SAMPLE PATIENT SCENARIO

John was driving home from work when he was involved in a serious car accident. He was rushed to the hospital unconscious and unable to communicate. Now, critical decisions must be made about his medical care. However, the course of action depends heavily on whether he had prepared for such a situation in advance.



- John met with his primary care provider to discuss his wishes, review his options and ensure everything is documented.
- He had open conversations with his health-care agent about his values, treatment preferences and what quality of life meant to him.
- His health-care agent was confident in making medical decisions that reflected John's previously stated wishes.
- John's care followed a clear plan, reducing stress and confusion for his loved ones.



- John never met with his primary care provider and there was nothing documented on his wishes.
- He never discussed his health-care preferences with anyone and did not appoint anyone as his health-care agent.
- His family members were unsure what he would have wanted regarding his care, which resulted in arguments, confusion and delayed medical decisions.
- John's treatment did not reflect what he truly wanted, leaving his loved ones uncertain and distressed.

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE HARD



Know What Matters Most

Think about what makes life meaningful to you. That could include comfort, independence, family or spiritual beliefs. Then consider what kind of medical care supports your values.



Pick Someone You Trust

Choose a health-care agent you trust to speak on your behalf if you can't. This could be a close friend, partner or relative who understands your wishes.



Write It Down

Document your preferences in an official plan and share with your primary care provider so your care team and family know exactly what you want.



Keep It Current

Review your plan regularly and update it after major life events like a diagnosis, marriage or loss.