

What is advance care planning?

Advance care planning involves shared planning for your future health care needs. It is a voluntary and ongoing process. It enables you to make some decisions now about the health care you would or would not like to receive if you were unable to communicate your preferences or make treatment decisions.

Everyone should consider advance care planning, regardless of their age or health. Advance care planning gives you the chance to:

- Talk to your family, friends and doctors about how you would like to be cared for in the future.
- Write down your own preferences for care and medical treatments.
- Choose who you would like to make medical treatment and care decisions for you.

Benefits for you and the people close to you

Advance care planning:

- Helps to ensure your wishes and preferences about health care are known and respected if you are too unwell to speak for yourself.
- Assists those who are close to you. Families of those who have done advance care planning have less anxiety and stress when asked to make important health care decisions for other people.

Writing your wishes and preferences down allows you to say what you would want. This can give peace of mind to you and comfort to others as wishes and preferences are clear, understood and more readily respected.

What do you need to do?

Be open

- Think about your wishes 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 communicate. Ask them if they are prepared to be your substitute decision-maker.

Think about a trusted person who is:

- available
- over the age of 18 years
- prepared to speak on your behalf and make the decisions you would make 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 wishes and preferences with your substitute decision-maker and other people involved in your care, such as family, friends, carers and doctors.
- Write your plan.
- Appoint your substitute decision-maker.

See advancecareplanning.org.au/create-your-plan and find the forms for your state or territory. Your GP or other health professional can support you to do advance care planning. You can also contact the National Advance Care Planning Support Service for free advice.

More information is available at
advancecareplanning.org.au

Be heard

A written advance care planning document will make things easier for your substitute decision-maker(s), if the need arises. It will give everyone peace of mind, knowing your wishes and preferences will be heard and respected.

Make copies of any documents and store them with:

- your substitute decision-maker(s) and family members
- your GP/local doctor and specialist(s)
- other care providers such as your aged care home or hospital.

You can also upload a copy of advance care planning documents to My Health Record for free.

Review your advance care planning documents regularly—for instance every year, or if there is a change in your health, personal or living circumstances. If you make changes, be sure to share updates with the people mentioned above and upload the new document to My Health Record.

The law and advance care planning

Different states and territories in Australia have different laws on advance care planning. For example, in some states and territories, there are important rules regarding who can witness documents for you. When planning for your own future health care, it will be helpful to understand the law in your own state/territory. See advancecareplanning.org.au for information.

Conversation starters

Speak to your family and others close to you about your wishes and preferences for your health care.

To get started, choose a quiet setting where you won't be interrupted.

Let the conversation happen naturally. There may be laughter and tears, grief and acceptance. You don't need to talk about everything all at once. Remember that advance care planning is an ongoing conversation. The more those close to you understand your wishes and preferences, the easier it will be for them to help guide your medical treatment. Tell them what treatment outcomes you would consider acceptable and which ones you would find unacceptable.

Starting the conversation can be the hardest part, so here are a few ways to begin:

- What I value and enjoy most in my life are
- I was thinking about what happened to and I realised that I
- I would want to make medical decisions on my behalf if I was unable to do so
- If happened to me, I would want because.....

Consider why you have given these answers.

Where can I get more information?

Advance Care Planning Australia™

 advancecareplanning.org.au

 National Advance Care Planning Support Service™ : 1300 208 582