

Q What about the withholding of artificially supplied food and water?

The Living Will and the Power of Attorney for Health Care both allow you to state whether or not you want feeding and fluid tubes removed if you are in a permanently unconscious state. If you are terminally ill and unable to communicate, and if your Living Will states that you don't want life-support technology used to prolong your life, then artificially supplied food and water can be withheld.

Q What about the withholding of artificially supplied food and water? (Cont'd)

If you don't have either of these forms, Ohio law allows your next-of-kin to authorize the withholding of artificially supplied food and water when you are terminally ill and unable to communicate. If you are in a permanently unconscious state, your next-of-kin can make these decisions for you only after a 12-month waiting period and approval from a Probate Court.

If you have further questions on Advance Directives including requesting documents, obtaining assistance in filling out these documents, reviewing your current Advance Directives, or making any changes you may call the Department of Social Work at 216-444-6552 or the Department of Pastoral Care at 216-444-2518.

This content is based, in part, on the FAQ's page on the Ohio Hospice and Palliative Care Organization's web site."



## Advanced Directives

You Have the Right: Stating Your Wishes Regarding Medical Treatment



## Advance Directives

Advance Directives give you a voice in decisions about your medical care when you are unconscious or too ill to communicate. The Power of Attorney for Health Care and Living Will are two documents that are part of Advance Directives. The Power of Attorney for Health Care allows you to appoint someone to make health care decisions for you if you are unable. It takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own decisions. The Living Will allows you to make decisions about what health care you would like should you become terminally ill and unable to communicate or in a permanently unconscious state. The Living Will allows life-sustaining treatment to be removed if you are terminally ill and unable to communicate or are in a permanently unconscious state. You also may choose if you would like feeding tubes removed in the same situations. The Living Will takes effect only when two physicians agree that you are terminally ill and unable to communicate or that you are in a permanently unconscious state.

These documents address different issues and take effect under different situations, so you may choose to fill out both forms, one of the forms, or neither form. It is important that you discuss your wishes regarding health care with the person you choose to make those decisions if you are unable. This conversation may include how you feel about life-sustaining treatment, being fed through feeding tubes, and other similar issues.

You do not need a lawyer to complete Advance Directives. They do need to be signed by a notary or two witnesses. The witness may include anyone except: your physician, family members, or anyone appointed as your decision maker in the Advance Directives. Any individual over 18 who can make his or her own decisions can complete Advance Directives.

## FAQs

- Q Aren't Living Wills or Powers of Attorney for Health Care just for older people?**  
It is important for anyone over the age of 18 to think about filling out one or both of these documents. Serious illness or injury can strike at any stage of life. A Living Will or Power of Attorney for Health Care will help to ensure that your wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment are followed and that when you are no longer able to voice your own wishes, your prior decisions are followed or made for you by the person you choose.
- Q What are my rights regarding medical treatment decisions?**  
You have the right to make your own medical treatment decisions. If you do not want certain treatments, you have the right to tell your doctor you do not want them. Most patients can express their wishes to their doctor, but some who are seriously injured or unconscious cannot. Advance Directives will help ensure your wishes are followed in these situations.
- Q If I state in my Living Will that I don't want to be hooked up to life support equipment, will I still be given medication for pain?**  
Yes. A Living Will only affects care that artificially or technologically postpones death. It would not affect care that eases pain. You would continue to be given any medication or treatment to keep you comfortable. The same is true for the Power of Attorney for Health Care; the person you name to make your health care decisions would not be able to order the withholding of treatments that provide you comfort or alleviate pain.
- Q If I have a Living Will, won't my physician be more likely to give up on me if I become really sick?**  
No. Physicians have a duty to maintain life as long as there is hope of recovery. A Living Will simply allows you to determine how much life-sustaining treatment you wish to receive in order to postpone dying once two physicians have determined that you will not recover.

- Q If I don't have a Living Will or Power of Attorney for Health Care, who makes my health care decisions when I'm terminally ill and unable to communicate or in a permanently unconscious state?**  
Ohio law recognizes an Order of Decision Makers when you are no longer able to make health care decisions for yourself. If the state has appointed a guardian, this person is the first decision-maker. If not, the order is as follows: spouse, adult children, parents, adult siblings, or other nearest adult relative.
- Q Can I make changes to my Advance Directives?**  
Yes. It is a good idea to review these documents periodically to be sure they still reflect your views. The most recent version is the one that will be followed. You may revoke previous versions. A revocation form is available on the website for the Department of Social Work at [www.clevelandclinic.org/socialwork/advancedirectives](http://www.clevelandclinic.org/socialwork/advancedirectives)
- Q Where do I get Living Will and Power of Attorney forms?**  
You may download forms from any state from the website of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization at [www.nhpc.org](http://www.nhpc.org). You may also request them through the Department of Social Work 216-444-6552 or the Department of Pastoral Care 216-444-2518 at the Cleveland Clinic.
- Q What do I do with my forms after filling them out?**  
We encourage you to have a copy of your Advance Directives placed in your medical records at the Cleveland Clinic. To do so, please call the Department of Social Work at 216-444-6552 for information on where to mail the documents.