Plan Ahead: Document Your Personal Health Care Decisions

Advance Directives

What are advance directives?
Advance directives are legal documents that provide instructions about who should oversee your medical treatment and what your end-of-life wishes are, in case you are unable to speak for yourself.

Advance directives include a Health Care Power of Attorney and a Living Will.

Other documents that can be prepared ahead of time to indicate your health care preferences include a Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) order and organ/tissue donor registration form. In addition, adult guardianship is a legal process that means a court-appointed person is assigned to make decisions about another person’s health care and other aspects of that person’s life (for example, where he or she should live).

All of these documents allow you to plan ahead by sharing your health care instructions with your medical team and your loved ones if you become unable, even temporarily, to make your own medical decisions. Advance directives help ensure your wishes are followed if you become seriously injured or unconscious.

Advance directives only come into effect when you are unable to make your own decisions about medical treatment. As long as you are able to make your own health care decisions, the forms will not be used.

If You Have Questions

The advance directives forms are easy to complete and we are here to help you. Please talk to your hospital social worker or a member of your hospital’s Spiritual Care Department if you need help completing the forms. We also have some cultural and religious-specific forms available that meet Ohio state laws, so please ask for more information. You can download new forms and view the Understanding Your Health Care Power of Attorney video at ccf.org/advancedirectives.

If you have questions or need help completing the forms, please call the number listed below for your hospital:

- Ashtabula County Medical Center, Care Management: 440.997.6633
- Cleveland Clinic Main Campus, Care Management: 216.444.6552
- Euclid Hospital, Care Management: 216.692.8800
- Fairview Hospital, Care Management: 216.476.7070
- Hillcrest Hospital, Care Management: 440.312.4662
- Lakewood Hospital, Care Management: 216.529.7193
- Lutheran Hospital, Care Management: 216.363.2030
- Marymount Hospital, Care Management: 216.587.8801
- Medina Hospital, Care Management: 330.721.5070
- South Pointe Hospital, Care Management: 216.491.7263

Advance directives only come into effect when you are unable to make your own decisions about medical treatment.

As long as you are able to make your own health care decisions, the forms will not be used.
You have the right to choose your own medical care based on your values, beliefs and personal choices.

You have the right to complete advance directive documents, at no charge, as long as you understand your options and can communicate them in front of witnesses OR a notary. You also have the right to wait and sign the forms when you feel confident that they accurately reflect your wishes.

You have choices. Advance directives are not required. You have the right to NOT complete advance directive documents. We are required to ask if you have completed these documents, but in doing so we are not trying to influence your decision to complete them. You may also choose to complete only one of the forms, and add the other documents when you are ready to make those decisions.

Advance directives are always optional. Advance directives are especially important if:

- Your caregiver or health care representative is not your legal next of kin (usually relatives or people related to you);
- You have multiple next of kin; OR
- You have specific medical wishes due to a medical condition, religious affiliation or family situation.

If you haven’t completed advance directives: Ohio law recognizes an Order of Decision Makers if you are unable to make health care decisions for yourself. If the state has appointed a guardian, this person is the first decision maker. If not, your legal next of kin have the right to make decisions for you. Ohio recognizes this order of your decision makers: legal guardian (if applicable), spouse, majority of adult children, parents, majority of adult siblings, or other nearest relative.

Completion of these forms is important for same sex couples. If the patient is unable to make his or her own health care decisions, either the next of kin or the legally appointed decision maker may act on the patient’s behalf. When a same-sex partner has not been given health care power of attorney or decision-making authority, Cleveland Clinic will seek a next-of-kin decision maker, in accord with Ohio law.

Think of completing advance directives like carrying an umbrella “just in case” it rains. You may not need the umbrella -- or the advance directives -- but they are there if you need them.

You have the right to complete advance directive documents, at no charge, as long as you understand your options and can communicate them in front of witnesses OR a notary. You also have the right to wait and sign the forms when you feel confident that they accurately reflect your wishes.

Notes
Talking with your loved ones about your wishes

Talking about end-of-life issues is difficult. However, it is important for your family to be aware of your decisions about medical care so they can be comforted and know they are following your wishes if necessary.

How do I complete advance directive forms?

Any person over age 18 who can make his or her own decisions can complete an advance directive form. You do not need a lawyer to complete advance directive forms. However, the forms need to be signed by a notary or two witnesses. The witness may include anyone except your physician, family members, or the person(s) you’re naming as decision maker in the advance directives. Please see the box on page 8 for help completing the forms.

What if I want to make a change to my forms?

It’s important to review your forms every year to make sure they still reflect your views. You may cancel or stop using previous versions of the forms by completing new ones. Any changes should be written, signed and dated in accord with state law, and copies should be given to your doctor and others who have original copies. The latest version of your form is the one that will be followed.

Where do I get advance directives forms?

You can download advance directive forms from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization website at www.nhpco.org. You can also request the forms from the Care Management or Spiritual/Pastoral Care departments (see page 8) or access the www.ccf.org/advancedirectives website to download advance directives forms and watch the advance directives video.

What if I live outside of Ohio?

The laws governing advance directives vary by state, so be sure to sign the forms from your home state. If you live outside of Ohio, you can give a copy of your existing advance directives to your medical staff to keep in your Cleveland Clinic medical record. If you live out of state and do NOT already have advance directives, you can get help completing Ohio documents. When you return home, you can either keep your Ohio documents or make new documents for your home state.

What do I do with my forms after I complete them?

After you complete the forms, talk to those people who may be involved in your healthcare decision making, and give them a copy of your forms to make sure your wishes are followed. Remember to include loved ones, family members and your healthcare providers so they know about your wishes.

We encourage you to have a copy of your advance directives placed in your medical record at Cleveland Clinic. If you have completed a living will or healthcare power of attorney and have not given us a copy, please send a copy (include your name and date of birth on the form) via fax or to the address listed below.

Return Your Forms to:

Please return your Advance Directive documents by mailing to the following address:
Cleveland Clinic
Health Information Management, Ab7
Advance Directive Processing
9500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44195-9905
Or
fax completed Advance Directive documents to:
Health Information Management
Advance Directive Processing
Fax Number: 216.445.9733

Please check to make sure the following have been completed prior to mailing or faxing your Advance Directive documents:
All required signatures and dates
Your (patient’s) name and date of birth are placed at the top of all pages of the Advance Directive document

Note: You can use this address if you are being treated at ANY Cleveland Clinic hospital, and we will make sure it is filed appropriately.

If you need assistance completing the forms, please see page 8.
Living Will

Definition: Allows you to give advance written directions about health care decisions when you are unable to make your own health care decisions or if you are in a permanently unconscious state. The patient uses the living will to state what type of medical treatment he/she does or doesn’t wish to receive if they are too ill or injured to direct their own care. A living will is NOT the same as last will and testament.

When It’s Used: Takes effect only when two physicians agree that the patient is terminally ill and unable to make his/her own health care decisions, OR that the patient is in a permanently unconscious state.

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who can make his/her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: You can download a living will form at www.uslivingwillregistry.com. You may also request a form from the Social Work or Spiritual/Pastoral Care departments. After completing the form, make copies, share it with those people who may be involved in your health care decision making, and return a copy so we can honor your wishes. Include your name and date of birth on the form. (See directions on page 6)

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order

Definition: When a medical emergency occurs, a DNR order alerts emergency personnel that a patient does not wish to receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in the event that the heart or breathing stops.

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who can make his/her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: Only when a medical emergency occurs. A doctor’s order is required. A DNR order is written by a physician after discussing the pros and cons of CPR with the patient or the patient’s surrogate decision maker. DNR orders can be requested by patients who have a terminal or other serious illness and feel strongly that they do not want to receive CPR.

Organ/Tissue Donor Registry Enrollment Form

Definition: Supplemental to the Healthcare Power of Attorney and the Living will, the Donor Registry Enrollment Form ensures that your wishes concerning organ and tissue donation will be honored.

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who can make his/her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: At the time of your death, your organs can be donated as indicated. This form can be completed at your local Bureau of Motor Vehicles, and directions about where to send it are provided on the form. You can also download the form online at www.lifebanc.org.

Health Care Power of Attorney

Definition: Allows you, the patient, to appoint a trusted person to make all health care decisions in the event that you:
- Become terminally ill and unable to make your own health care decisions; or
- Are temporarily or permanently unable to make decisions for yourself.

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who is not under current guardianship who can make his or her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: You may download advance directive forms for any state from the website of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization at www.nhpc.org. You may also request them from the Social Work or Spiritual/Pastoral Care departments or go to the links listed at the end of this document.

After completing the form, make copies, share it with those people who may be involved in your health care decision making, and return a copy so we can honor your wishes. Include your name and date of birth on the form. (See directions on page 6)

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who can make his/her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: Takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own health care decisions. If you are temporarily impaired, you become the decision maker once you can make decisions for yourself. This designee has the authority to oversee your wishes and to make other necessary decisions about health care matters.

Living Will

Definition: Takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own health care decisions. If you are temporarily impaired, you become the decision maker once you can make decisions for yourself.

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who is not under current guardianship who can make his or her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: You may download advance directive forms for any state from the website of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization at www.nhpc.org. You may also request them from the Social Work or Spiritual/Pastoral Care departments or go to the links listed at the end of this document.

After completing the form, make copies, share it with those people who may be involved in your health care decision making, and return a copy so we can honor your wishes. Include your name and date of birth on the form. (See directions on page 6)

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who can make his/her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: Takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own health care decisions. If you are temporarily impaired, you become the decision maker once you can make decisions for yourself. This designee has the authority to oversee your wishes and to make other necessary decisions about health care matters.

Living Will

Definition: Takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own health care decisions. If you are temporarily impaired, you become the decision maker once you can make decisions for yourself.

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who is not under current guardianship who can make his or her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: You may download advance directive forms for any state from the website of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization at www.nhpc.org. You may also request them from the Social Work or Spiritual/Pastoral Care departments or go to the links listed at the end of this document.

After completing the form, make copies, share it with those people who may be involved in your health care decision making, and return a copy so we can honor your wishes. Include your name and date of birth on the form. (See directions on page 6)

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who can make his/her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: Takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own health care decisions. If you are temporarily impaired, you become the decision maker once you can make decisions for yourself. This designee has the authority to oversee your wishes and to make other necessary decisions about health care matters.

Living Will

Definition: Takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own health care decisions. If you are temporarily impaired, you become the decision maker once you can make decisions for yourself.

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who is not under current guardianship who can make his or her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: You may download advance directive forms for any state from the website of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization at www.nhpc.org. You may also request them from the Social Work or Spiritual/Pastoral Care departments or go to the links listed at the end of this document.

After completing the form, make copies, share it with those people who may be involved in your health care decision making, and return a copy so we can honor your wishes. Include your name and date of birth on the form. (See directions on page 6)

Who Can Complete: Any person over age 18 who can make his/her own health care decisions.

What to Do/How to Proceed: Takes effect only when you are temporarily or permanently unable to make your own health care decisions. If you are temporarily impaired, you become the decision maker once you can make decisions for yourself. This designee has the authority to oversee your wishes and to make other necessary decisions about health care matters.