

Give Peace of Mind: Advance Care Planning

What Is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning can be a gift you give yourself and your family. It is about doing what you can to make sure that your preferences and wishes are in line with the medical care you might receive if you were unable to communicate or make decisions for yourself. While many of us would prefer not to think that we will ever require such a plan, all too frequently the absence of advance care planning can lead to family members doubting, being unclear about, or disagreeing with one another as they try to imagine what you would want if you were unable to communicate for yourself.

How Can a Plan Help Me and My Family?

A plan spares your loved ones the stress of worrying about whether they "did the right thing" on your behalf. A plan also informs your medical team of your preferences for care and whether you would want to be kept alive if it seemed unlikely that you would make a full recovery.

Advance care planning is a crucial component of managing chronic diseases for the large number of older Americans who are now living with one or more chronic disorders. There may come a moment when some people are unable to speak for themselves or make their own healthcare decisions.

You want to make sure that your voice is heard at this time and that your intentions and preferences about medical care and heroic measures are understood and respected. You can do it thanks to an advance health care directive.

**Do you belong to the 70% of Americans who don't have an advance care directive?
Make sure your family is aware of your wishes and preferences to provide yourself and
both of your peace of mind.**

Is The Plan Free for Me as a Medicare Patient?

You won't be required to pay a copayment or deductible if you discuss advanced care planning with your doctor during your annual wellness visit. The copayments will be charged if the conversation takes place during another appointment, such as a routine check-up or a visit for Chronic Care Management.

Communicating and Documenting Your Wishes

An advance directive is a written statement that names a legal representative (sometimes known as a "surrogate" or "medical proxy") and expresses a person's preferences for medical care. It contains the name of the person you have designated to speak and act in your place. Your "health care proxy" or "durable power of attorney for health care" should be someone you trust, who understands your preferences and will make every effort to respect and carry them out. When you have finished writing your advance directive, make sure you give copies to your healthcare proxy and anyone else you believe needs to know. Review your advance directive if necessary.