

Choosing a Healthcare Agent

Planning for peace of mind

You have many rights when you receive healthcare. You have the right to:

- Be told about medical choices and their risks and benefits
- Accept or refuse these choices
- Have your choices honored

You also have the right to choose someone who can make medical decisions for you and be your voice if you can't speak for yourself. This person is called a **healthcare agent**.

Things to Think About When Choosing a Healthcare Agent

The person you choose to be your healthcare agent must be:

- Willing to take on this role and responsibility.
- Willing to talk with you about the healthcare you want or don't want if you have a serious injury or illness.
- Able to follow through on your healthcare decisions even if they do not agree with your choices.
- Able to make these medical decisions in difficult and often stressful situations.

If the person you have chosen cannot answer **"yes"** to all of these responsibilities, you may want to choose someone else to be your healthcare agent.

If you are unable to make your own healthcare choices because of a serious illness or injury, such as a serious brain injury from a car accident, your healthcare agent will have to make healthcare decisions for you.

Preparing Your Healthcare Agent

Your healthcare agent needs to understand your wishes for future medical care and what matters most to you. Ask and answer the following questions:

- What is important to me to live well?
- When would life not be worth living?
- When would I want my care providers to stop treatments that may keep me alive?

Include your healthcare agent in any advance care planning conversations so they can hear your wishes and can ask questions if they do not understand something.

Make statements and use language that is clear and not vague.

- **Vague:** "Don't keep me alive if I'm a vegetable."
- **Clear:** "Don't keep me alive if I won't know who I am or who I am with."

Invite your healthcare agent to go with you to your healthcare appointments. They can get to know your provider and ask questions so they understand your health conditions.



Documenting Your Healthcare Agent

Each state has their own form to record the name and information of the person you have chosen as your healthcare agent. Names of these forms can include:

- **Healthcare Advance Directive** or **Advance Directive for Healthcare**
- **Living Will**
- **Healthcare Power of Attorney** or **Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare**

Your state's form can be found at intermountainhealthcare.org. Using the search bar, enter "**Advance Care Documents**" to find the forms.

Each form will have instructions on how to complete it and make your document legal.

Start Planning Now

You will need time to understand, reflect, discuss, and make a plan for what matters most to you. When talking about your wishes for future medical care, you may feel uncomfortable, but the more you communicate with your healthcare agent, the better prepared they will be to make medical decisions for you.

Where to Learn More About Advance Care Planning Intermountain Healthcare

- Talk to your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider
- Call **1-800-442-4845** (toll-free) at any time to be referred to someone who can help with advance care planning
- Visit this website: intermountainhealthcare.org/advanceplanning

Where to find more information

From the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO):

- Visit this website: caringinfo.org
- Call these toll-free phone numbers:
 - **1-800-658-8898 (helpline)**
 - **1-877-658-8896 (en español: Cuidando con Carino)**

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