

Peace of Mind Comes from Preparedness

Advanced care planning is when you think and talk about what you want for your healthcare in the future if you cannot make decisions for yourself. It can be emotional and difficult, but it's important to do. This guide will help you and your loved ones understand what you need to do. It is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. You can take your time and use it to share your feelings with your healthcare providers, family, and friends. The answers you give will help your loved ones make choices for you if you are too sick to make them yourself.

Who should make decisions for me?

An important part of planning is to think about who you should appoint someone to make your healthcare decisions if you can't make them yourself.

Many people choose a close family member, but you are free to pick anyone who is 18 or older and, you think could best represent you. You need to be able to trust this person and know that they are:

- Willing to accept this responsibility.
- Willing to talk to you about what matters most.
- Willing to follow the values and instructions you have discussed.
- Able to make complex, difficult decisions.

It's helpful — but not required — to appoint one or more people in case your first choice becomes unable or unwilling to represent you.



It's best if only one person has authority at a time, but you can instruct your representatives to discuss decisions together if time allows.

What to consider when making decisions

Looking back

Who we are, what we believe, and what we value are all shaped by our life experiences. Religion, family traditions, jobs, and friends affect us deeply. Has anything happened in your past that shaped your feelings about medical treatment? Think about an experience in which a family member or friend was faced with a decision about medical care near the end of life. What was positive about that experience? What do you wish would have been done differently?

Here and now

Do you have any significant health problems now? What kinds of things bring you joy? If a health problem kept you from doing them any longer, would your life's meaning change? What short — or long-term goals do you have? How might medical treatment help or hinder your efforts to attain those goals? What are the risks?

Ask yourself these questions:

What are my biggest health problems? What worries me about them?

What health problems do I fear in the future?

What frightens me about medical treatment? Why?

How does my culture, religion, faith, spirituality, and other belief systems affect how I live my life and accept medical treatment?

How does cost influence my decisions about medical care?

In terms of future medical care, would I want to switch from keeping me alive to focusing on comfort? Describe these circumstances in as much detail as possible.

Ask yourself: What will help me live well at this point in my life?

What future decisions need to be considered?

Providing instructions for future healthcare decisions may seem like an impossible task. How can anyone plan for all the possibilities? You can't, and you don't have to. However, you DO need to plan for situations in which you:

- 1 Become unexpectedly incapable of making your own decisions.
- 2 Will clearly have little or no recovery.
- 3 Have an injury or loss of function that is significant.

These situations might be caused by an injury to the brain from an accident, stroke, or a slowly progressive disease like Alzheimer's.

To plan for this type of situation, many people say, "If I'm going to be a vegetable, let me go" or "No heroics" or "Don't keep me alive on machines." While these remarks are a beginning, they are too vague to guide decision making.

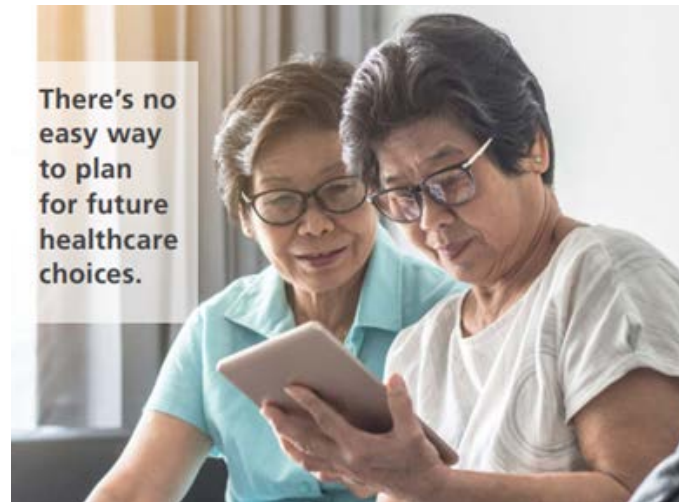
You need to completely describe the circumstances when the decision would change from attempting to prolong life to allowing you to die.

In some situations, certain treatments may not make sense because they will not help, but other treatments will be of important benefit.

Consider these questions:

- 1 When would it make sense to continue certain treatments to prolong life and seek recovery?
- 2 When would it make sense to stop or withhold certain treatments, and accept a natural death when it comes?

It is important to know that if you decide to stop certain treatments to prolong life, you will always receive treatment to keep you comfortable. Making these choices requires understanding, weighing benefits and burdens from your perspective, and discussing your choices with those closest to you.



There's no easy way to plan for future healthcare choices.

What's next?

- 1 First, talk about your feelings and choice with your family, friends, clergy, and doctor.
- 2 Second, put your choices in writing. Information about putting your plans into writing — in an advance directive — is available from your healthcare organization or attorney.
- 3 Third, give copies to all of your doctors, your healthcare agent and those that you want to share your wishes with. Submit your documents to Intermountain Health so they are in your electronic medical record.

MAIL:

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FAX:

Using the original document fax to:
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