What is Advance Care Planning?

**Advance care planning** is the process of sharing your personal values and preferences about health care with your healthcare team and close family and friends. It includes conversations to help you think about, talk about, and document how you wish to be cared for. It is important that others know your wishes in case you become unable to express them yourself.

**Substitute decision makers**

A substitute decision maker is a person or persons who will inform the care team about your wishes, if you are unable to do so yourself. The substitute decision maker must understand and represent your wishes for medical care, and be able to provide consent for treatments. The role of the substitute decision maker is to help communicate your medical wishes to the healthcare provider, and NOT their own wishes for you. If you do not already have one, it is important to think about who your substitute decision maker will be.

**GET INFORMATION: Questions to ask your healthcare team**

Advance care planning involves indicating your preferences around specific health conditions that you are likely to experience. In order to determine your preferences, you need to understand your own medical situation, the medical choices you have, and what to expect. Some questions you may want to ask your healthcare provider include:

- What are my current health conditions and concerns?
- What specific medical problems can I anticipate with these conditions?
- How can I prepare for these anticipated problems?
- What types of treatments and/or procedures are available?
- What are the benefits, risks and side effects of these treatments and/or procedures?
- What can I realistically anticipate after these treatments and/or procedures, especially as it regards my quality of life?
- What will happen if I decide to not have the treatment and/or procedure?

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Notes and Reflections
You can use this space to jot down notes and reflections about the information presented on this handout. A few questions to consider include:

1. What are my thoughts and concerns about my current health condition(s)?

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2. What treatments related to my condition am I aware of? Would these treatments help me to maintain the quality of life that I wish for myself?

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3. What questions do I have for my healthcare team about my current health conditions?

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Communication

Once you have gathered the information from your healthcare provider and outlined your wishes, share them with your:

• Substitute decision maker(s)
• Family and close friends
• Any other members of your healthcare team

REMEMBER!

Even when healthcare wishes are documented, you always have the right to change your mind. Your healthcare team will always ask your permission to provide any treatment. If you are unable to express your wishes, your substitute decision maker will speak on your behalf.

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