

Talking with your provider

Plan to make an appointment with your healthcare provider and let them know you would like to talk about making healthcare plans for your future and learn more about advance directives. At your visit bring up any illnesses you have, your goals and wishes and planning for the future. People who think through what is important to them and what their healthcare wishes are for the future often feel less anxious, more at peace and more in control of their health.

Before you meet with your healthcare provider, prepare for your conversation by thinking about these things:

- What would you like to know about your illness (if you have one) and what is likely to be ahead?
- What kind of information would help you make decisions about your future?
- What is most important for you to have good quality of life?
- What are you afraid of about your illness (if you have one)?
- What kind of medical care do you not want?
- What do you think it would be like to share these thoughts with your family?
- If you haven't already identified a Medical Durable Power of Attorney, who would be able to fill that role?

When you meet with your healthcare provider:

- Plan to bring any kind of advance directives you might already have filled out. This could include a living will, MOST form or Medical Durable Power of Attorney form.
- Ask for a copy of what advance care planning documents they recommend, how to fill them out, who should receive copies, and where to keep them.

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Having the Conversation

Talking with healthcare providers and loved ones about your illness



Having the Conversation

Why is this important?

Thinking about and sharing your healthcare wishes for the future will give you more control over the care you receive. It will also help prepare your loved ones to make decisions for you if you can't make them for yourself at some point. Knowing what you want will ease the burden on your family of making hard decisions for you if you can't speak for yourself. Having your decisions documented will assure anyone involved in your care knows what your wishes are.

Talking about the future

We recommend you talk with your loved ones once you have had an initial discussion about your healthcare wishes with your primary healthcare provider. You may find it helpful to bring a loved one to a future appointment with your healthcare provider to be a part of the conversation, such as the person you would like to make health-related decisions on your behalf if you are not able to (a Medical Durable Power of Attorney).

Wishes may change over time

As time passes, you may have new thoughts or questions about your healthcare wishes for the future. This is just the beginning of a very important ongoing conversation. Your healthcare provider will continue to support you and answer your questions about your healthcare wishes so that you can make informed decisions.



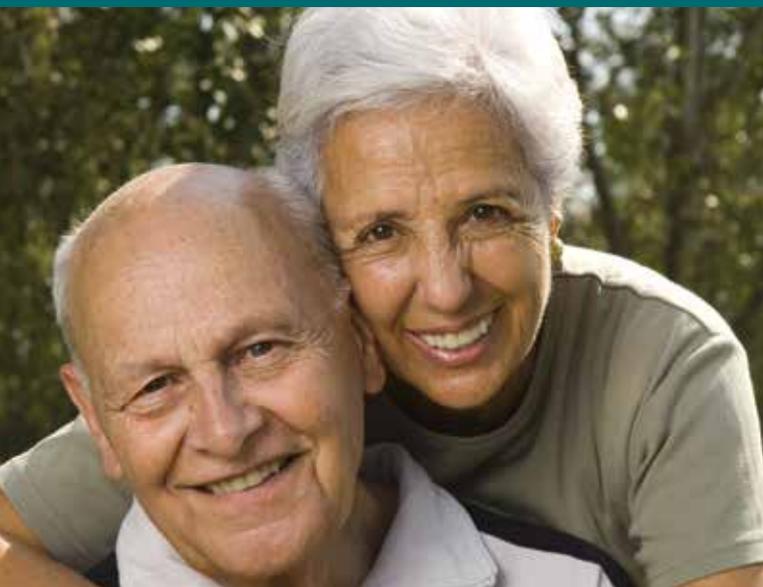
Talking with loved ones

Talking about your illness with friends and family may not be easy, but it will help them understand what is important to you and why. It will also help them support you and your decisions.

Before you talk to your loved ones, think about when and where you want to talk. Choose a time and a place when you will feel relaxed and be sure you have time to talk for a while. You can also use this guide to help start the conversation or use your own words— whichever is easier for you.

If your loved one seems to be reluctant to have a conversation about your future healthcare wishes, use tips and conversation starters in this guide to have the conversation. You may be surprised how the person might open up once they realize how important the conversation is to you.

It is also important that you share with your loved ones who you would like to designate to make healthcare-related decisions on your behalf if there is ever a time you can't make them for yourself.



Starting the Conversation

Here are some ways to help get the conversation started for people in different scenarios.

If you are healthy:

- “My health is good right now, but I want to talk to you about what I’d want if I was sick and needed you to make decisions for me.”
- “I have just filled out some forms about my wishes for future healthcare and I want to share it with you.”

If you have a serious illness:

- “I am doing ok right now, and even though there is no rush, my doctors think we need to begin talking about my future care. My doctors believe in being prepared and they want to know my goals and wishes for medical care so I want to discuss them with you.”
- “Since you are important to me, I’d also like you to be part of the conversation about my future healthcare wishes.”

If you are the loved one of someone with a serious illness who should be having these conversations:

- “I know you are doing ok right now and I don’t want to rush things, but I am wondering if we could take a few minutes to talk about what’s important as time goes forward with your care.”
- “You are very important to me and I want to make sure I support all of your goals and wishes as we go forward together with your medical care. It seems there will be decisions regarding treatment and care that will come up and I want to make sure I know what you want.”

Share what is important to you

Share what is important to you with your loved ones by talking about the following topics:

Goals and wishes

I’d like to share some of my goals that might affect my healthcare decisions. Some things I’m looking forward to are . . .

Examples: Meet my new grandchild, celebrate my next birthday, etc.

Fears and worries

My biggest fears and worries about my future are . . .

Examples: Who will look after my children, will my family be provided for, etc.

My biggest fears and worries about my future with this illness are . . .

Examples: Not being able to make decisions for myself or having to ask others for help with basic needs.

Abilities

I can’t imagine not being able to do certain things . . .

Examples: Not being able to recognize or interact with people, not being able to care for myself, not being able to breathe on my own, etc.

Tough Choices

I know that difficult choices about my care may have to be made. Some things I want to discuss are . . .

Examples: Being in the hospital, having a feeding tube, living in a nursing home, being on a breathing machine, additional or experimental treatments, etc.

Checking in with your loved one

If you have a serious illness, check in with your loved one to find out how much they know about your illness and what you would like them to know.

Understanding

What is your understanding now of where I am with my illness?

Information

I know that it may not be easy, but I would like to share information about my illness with you. Is that okay?

How much information about my illness and what lies ahead would you like from me?

I want to let you know that I am comfortable with discussing this as much as you are comfortable with as time goes on.

Plan to talk again

Do you have any questions about what we have discussed?

I would like to talk with you about my illness and medical care as my treatment continues. Is that okay?

I know this was probably not an easy conversation. How do you feel now that we have talked?

Are there other people we should talk with?

Remember to talk again with your loved ones or caregivers as your health or wishes for your healthcare change.