

Advance Directives

What is an Advance Directive?

An “Advance Directive” is a way for you to share your wishes for what medical treatment you do or don’t want with your loved ones and your health care team. It’s called an “advance directive” because it lets you share your wishes in advance of a health crisis.

Rather than make a list of types of care that you do or don’t want, an Advance Directive is based on your values. This form lets you do two things:

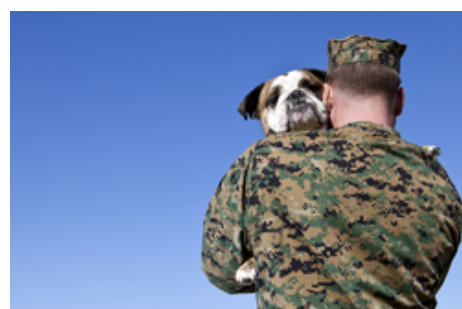
- Name people to make health care choices for you
- Describe how you want to be treated

The VA has an advance directive form that your care team can give you.



What if You Couldn't Speak for Yourself?

It's a good idea to put your wishes about your health care into an advance directive. You just never know when an accident or a health crisis like a heart attack or stroke might keep you from being able to say what kind of care YOU want. When you have a health problem like chronic kidney disease (CKD), you can have a good life. And, it's also wise to plan ahead—just in case.



Types of Medical Care to Think About:

There are some questions that only you can answer. If you ever become too ill to speak for yourself, it is a comfort to your loved ones to know what you would want—and not have to guess. Take some time to think about what each of these treatments might mean for you.



- Oxygen from a mask
- Breathing tube (ventilator)
- Feeding tube
- Intravenous fluids
- Blood products
- Antibiotics
- Pain relief
- CPR
- Dialysis

Do you want aggressive medical care? Do you want care to stop at a certain point? There are no right or wrong answers. Your care team can answer questions for you about treatments. You might talk to your social worker or chaplain, too, if you're not sure what you might want.

Click [here](#) to get a copy of the [VA Advance Directive](#) form.

Living Will

A living will is one part of an advance directive. It is a legal document that takes effect if and when you are not able to speak for yourself. A living will states your wishes for what kind of treatment you do and don't want. Some people have a lawyer help them make out a living will, but you don't have to.

If you make out a living will, be sure to sign it, date it, and give a copy to your loved ones and your care team. A living will does no good if no one knows you have one. You will need to update your living will if you change your mind about what kind of care you want. If you change your living will, date the new form, share the new copy with your loved ones and care team, and ask them to tear up the old one.



Health Care Power of Attorney

A health care “proxy” or health care power of attorney is a form you sign that gives someone else the right to make health care choices for you if you can’t make them yourself.

It’s best not to spring this on someone! If you have a loved one you would like to ask, talk to him or her about it. Be sure that he or she is willing to take the responsibility and knows what your wishes would be. Give him or her a signed and dated copy of the power of attorney form and your living will—and share it with your health care team.



Focus on the Future!

When you know that you have shared your wishes with your loved ones, you can focus on living each day to its fullest.

