

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING: HOW TO APPROACH THE CONVERSATION

INFORMATION FOR OLDER ADULTS, FAMILIES,
AND CAREGIVERS



READ THIS PAMPHLET TO LEARN:

- What Advance Care Planning Is.
- How to Start a Conversation About Your Future Care.
- What the Challenges and Benefits of Advance Care Planning Are.



**Sinai
Health**

Healthy Ageing
and Geriatrics



UHN

Toronto General
Toronto Western
Princess Margaret
Toronto Rehab
Michener Institute

WHAT IS ADVANCE CARE PLANNING?

Advance Care Planning is a process to help you think about and communicate choices about your future care should you lose the capacity to make informed decisions about your life. As part of advance care planning, you can:



- Name a Substitute Decision-Maker: the person or persons who will make decisions for you;
- Write down your wishes about medical care, living arrangements and end-of-life care;
- Name a Power of Attorney for personal care;
- Name a Power of Attorney for care of your finances and property.

None of these are mandatory. However, making an Advance Care Plan can help your family, friends and health care providers ensure your wishes are respected. It can greatly reduce stress on your family members in particular, who may need to make decisions for you if you cannot.

WHAT SORTS OF DECISIONS ARE INVOLVED IN ADVANCE CARE PLANS?

Many of us have a general idea about the care we want or do not want to receive and can easily communicate in words to a partner or to children that, for example, a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order is desirable. However, an Advance Care Plan can go into greater detail, and include a level of specific preferences that may involve any of the following:



- Who you want to make decisions for you (you cannot name someone paid to look after you unless this is a spouse, partner or

relative; nor can you name anyone who is under 16 or is mentally incapable of making health care decisions).

- What you want related to personal care, such as where you want to live, what you want to eat and wear.
- What kind of health care you want, such as an admission or discharge from a medical facility, or moving into or receiving personal care in a long-term care home.
- Whether you want to be resuscitated should you suffer a stroke, heart attack, medical emergency or an incapacitating accident.
- What your intentions are should you be referred to receive palliative or end-of-life care.

WHAT IS INFORMED CONSENT?

Informed consent is the capacity to make informed decisions about your life. Health care providers must explain in detail any tests or treatments you undergo, including:



- Risks, benefits and side effects
- Alternatives to these options
- What may happen if you refuse these options

Before you consent to treatments, procedures or therapies, health care providers must answer questions you have about them. A person's capacity can be determined by a health care professional proposing a specific treatment or course of action. If you are found to be incapable of making health care decisions, you have the right to consult the Consent and Capacity Board to review this finding. The health care provider who finds you incapable must tell you of this right. A substitute decision maker or a Power of Attorney must also be considered to make decisions on your behalf.

WHY IS ADVANCE CARE PLANNING IMPORTANT?

You have the right to make choices about your body. However, accidents, trauma, diseases and conditions, such as cognitive impairment and dementias, like Alzheimer's Disease can diminish your ability to make decisions.



Making an Advance Care Plan allows you to name the person(s) who will make decisions for you in the event that you are unable to make these decisions yourself. It also communicates your wishes regarding many health issues, including:

- Diagnostic and medical procedures, whether these are preventive, therapeutic, or cosmetic.
- Interventions to prolong life.
- The type of care you want should you be unable to care for yourself.
- Palliative and end-of-life care options.

Accidents and unexpected illnesses can arise at any time, so communicating an Advance Care Plan is important at any age. Families and physicians greatly benefit from knowing ahead of time what you want.



For older adults, there are even more reasons to engage in advance care planning:

- Decisions about medical care may be more frequent, and the need to make medical decisions is more likely as you age.
- The possibility or necessity of moving into a retirement residence or into a long-term care home may compel individual or joint family decision-making.
- End-of-life care decisions are closer.
- Children could live far away and be unable to provide immediate assistance.

The physical and social effects of ageing often present new challenges. Advance care planning can help you meet these with confidence and grace.

WHAT ADVANCE CARE PLANNING IS NOT

Advance Care Planning communicates your wishes.

It is not advance consent to any particular treatment nor an Advance Directive for treatment. An advance care plan that expresses your wishes for personal care is not legally binding. However, it does make decisions easier for the people who will care for you if you cannot do so yourself, and makes your wishes more likely to be followed.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ADVANCE CARE PLANNING?

The benefits of Advance Care Planning are personal, familial and social.



- Your family, friends and health care professionals will benefit from knowing what you want. You will benefit from conversations, as you may change your mind while you talk about different aspects of values, expectations and preferences.
- Advance Care Plans can reduce unwanted hospitalizations at the end of life and ensure you get the care you want.
- Some health care options may be ineffective or harmful for older adults. Thoughtful consideration of your choices, preferably before the time when these may need to be made urgent, can help avoid fruitless interventions.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF ADVANCE CARE PLANNING?

Despite the benefits of Advance Care Planning, many are hesitant to create a plan, and almost half of older adults never do so. This may be due to one or several reasons:

- Many of us are reluctant to discuss illness and death.
- Perspectives on life may shift as we get older.
- Loss of a spouse, sibling, child or friend can create feelings of isolation that hinder decision-making.
- Physical, cognitive and psychological changes may cause us to postpone decisions.
- Some health care professionals aren't comfortable or well trained enough to discuss end-of-life topics and hesitate to raise these with their patients. Discussions with family and friends before you raise the topic with your doctor or caregiver will allow you to lead the discussion.



WHAT ARE SOME DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ADVANCE CARE PLANNING?

There are many ways you can gain more information about advance care planning and end-of-life care that can help you clarify your wishes and communicate them to others. Some strategies include:



- Considering carefully your own values, beliefs and resources when exploring information about choices. “What makes life meaningful?” is one question you may want to consider.
- Having conversations about your future as you age. Advance Care Plans can be difficult to discuss, as illness, mental incapacity and death are topics we often avoid. If no-one else is available, a family doctor or a lawyer can clarify options and open the way to meaningful consideration.
- Seek out information related to health care, shelter, clothing, nutrition, hygiene, personal safety and end-of-life care. Many organizations provide information about these issues. A primary care provider or members of your family may be helpful as well. Try using films, books, magazine articles, websites and personal conversations with friends or family as starting points for information about advance care considerations.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PERSONAL CARE KIT - MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Information about Naming a Power of Attorney and for the Power of Attorney for Personal Care Form, visit the below website to download the full kit.



www.publications.gov.on.ca/300652

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING - SPEAK UP CANADA

Information about Advance Care Planning and making a plan for future health decisions.



www.advancecareplanning.ca/resource/ontario

HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE ONTARIO

Provides resources to navigate end-of-life decisions, including a guide to Advance Care Planning in Ontario.



www.hpcoco.ca

www.hpcoco.ca/acp/

RELEVANT RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES

- Substitute Decision Makers and Powers of Attorney
- Understanding Your Palliative Care Options

ADDITIONAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES:

- Advance Care Planning: How to Approach the Conversation
- Alcohol and Your Health
- Calcium, Vitamin D and Bone Health
- General Tips for Managing Memory Problems
- Improving Urinary Incontinence
- Living Longer, Living Well – Your Guide to Healthy Ageing
- Managing Caregiver Stress
- Managing Chronic Pain
- Managing Common Mental Health Conditions in Older Adults
- Managing Constipation
- Managing Mild Cognitive Impairment, Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias
- Managing Multiple Chronic Health Conditions
- Managing Sedative-Hypnotic Use Among Older Adults
- Managing Sleep in Older Adults
- Managing Substance Use and Addictive Disorders As You Age
- Preventing Falls at Home
- Recognizing and Managing Anxiety
- Recognizing and Managing Depression
- Recognizing and Managing Hearing Loss
- Safe Medication Use for Older Adults
- Staying Active As You Age

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES:

- Community Transportation Options
- Driving Assessment Services
- Elder Abuse
- Funding for Mobility and Other Aids from the Assistive Devices Program
- Housing Options for Older Adults
- How to Register for Wheel-Trans
- Meals on Wheels

Visit www.sinaigeriatrics.ca/healtheducation for additional resources for older adults, families and caregivers.

This information is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for non-commercial personal use only.

We would like to thank the following for their support of our Education Resources to Support Healthy Ageing Initiative:



**The Ben and
Hilda Katz
Foundation**

Mon Sheong Foundation and the Ben and Hilda Katz Foundation have generously provided funding to support printing and translation of our Education Resources to Support Healthy Ageing.



The Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility supported this initiative with funding through its Seniors Community Grant Program.