



Atrium Health

Take Control of Your Future Care With an

# Advance Directive

Think About It. Talk About It. Write It Down.

Most of us hope we will always be healthy and in control of our own lives. But if a sudden accident or serious illness left you unable to speak for yourself, would your loved ones know what medical choices to make for you?

Having an advance directive is a way to make sure you have control over those decisions.

**Here's how you can create one.**

## Step 1: Think About It

- **Choose your health care agent:** Think about who you would trust to make choices for you if you were unable to speak for yourself. Your health care agent does not have to be a family member, but they must be competent, at least 18 years old and cannot be someone you pay for healthcare services.
- **Choose your care:** Many people choose to focus on how they are living. Others want to live as long as possible, even if they require constant medical care. To decide what is right for you, think about your goals and values.

## Step 2: Talk About It

- **Talk to your health care agent:** Make sure the person you choose as your health care agent is comfortable making medical choices for you. Once they agree, review the goals and values you considered and discuss when life would not be worth living for you as well as what matters most to you at the end of your life.
- **Talk to your doctors:** If you're not sure what type of treatments you would want, ask your doctor to explain the options. If you know what you would want, tell your doctor.
- **Talk to your loved ones:** Explain who you have chosen as your health care agent and what decisions you have asked them to make.

## Step 3: Write It Down

- **Complete a Health Care Power of Attorney form:** This is a legal form in which you choose another person, called a health care agent, to be in charge of your care when you're not able to make decisions for yourself.
- **Complete a Living Will form:** This is a legal form that lets you express your wishes about having a natural death by choosing not to receive life-prolonging measures in specific circumstances. Life-prolonging measures are medical treatments that would postpone death, including mechanical ventilation, artificial nutrition and hydration and similar forms of treatment. A Living Will is only used if you are unable to make decisions for yourself.

Advance care planning is important for all adults, no matter how old you are or what medical conditions you have. It is an ongoing process and may involve several conversations. Having these conversations now will make decisions easier on your agent, your loved ones and your doctors if you cannot make choices for yourself. Once you make your choices, write them down using an advance directive and share that advance directive with your doctor, health care agent and loved ones.

If your health is getting worse, this is a good time to update your advance directive and talk with your healthcare provider about medical orders that can support your wishes, such as a North Carolina MOST (Medical Order for Scope of Treatment) and DNR (Do Not Resuscitate).



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Learn more about these steps and find out where to get free help completing your advance directive at [AtriumHealth.org/WriteItDown](https://www.AtriumHealth.org/WriteItDown)