

Advanced Care Planning FAQs

Q: What are advance care planning decisions?

A: Sometimes decisions must be made about the use of emergency treatments to keep you alive. Doctors can use several artificial or mechanical ways to do this. Decisions that might come up at this time relate to CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), ventilator use, artificial nutrition, (tube feeding) and artificial hydration (IV, or intravenous fluids) and comfort care.

Q: Will I need an attorney to complete my Advance Directive?

A: No, you can sign the Advance Directive without an attorney.

Q: Will my Healthcare Decision Maker be able to make decisions for me that involve money?

A: Not unless you complete a Power of Attorney form which grants rights to your agent to make decisions for you about financial and property matters.

Q: Can I change any of the choices I've made in my Advance Healthcare Directive?

A: Yes at any time you can come back and make changes to your decisions.

Q: Will my Advance Directive be valid when I travel to other states?

A: Each state may have different guidelines. You should check the guidelines in the state where you plan to travel.

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Q: What is a POLST form?

A: A POLST form is a medical order that tells emergency personnel how to treat you during a medical crisis if you're unable to speak for yourself. The POLST covers three main topics:

1. Whether you wish medical personnel to attempt to resuscitate you (restart your heart, use a breathing machine) or allow a natural death if your heart stops beating and/or you are no longer breathing.
2. Use other forms of treatments and artificial life support (examples are dialysis, antibiotics, surgery, hospitalization and so forth).
3. Whether you would like to receive nutrition artificially if you are no longer able to eat food.

All of these options are discussed with you in detail by your doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant and the order requires their signature. It is a valid medical order that can be changed at any time for any reason based upon your wishes. POLSTs are most often completed when a person is living with serious or life-threatening illness, or have reached an age when natural death is preferred.

Q: How is a POLST form different than an Advance Directive?

A: A POLST form is a medical order that tells paramedics and emergency personnel how to proceed with care when you cannot speak for yourself. An Advance Directive outlines your overall wishes for care and designates a Durable Power of Attorney (DPOA) for medical decision making if you cannot speak for yourself. Your Advance Directive is not a medical order and is appropriate for anyone at any age. Wishes can change as people grow older and/or develop medical conditions that affect their treatment wishes. Advanced Directives and DPOAs can be changed at any time.