

Advance Care Planning

Making your wishes known

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance Care Planning is an important process that helps you plan for future care, for a time when you are not able to make your health care wishes known.

The process involves thinking about your values, beliefs and wishes about the health care you would like to have if you could not make your own decisions.

It is best if Advance Care Planning happens earlier in life, when you are still well.

Why do I need to think about Advance Care Planning?

Medical technology advances mean that there are treatments which may prolong your life, and that can keep you alive when you are seriously ill or injured.

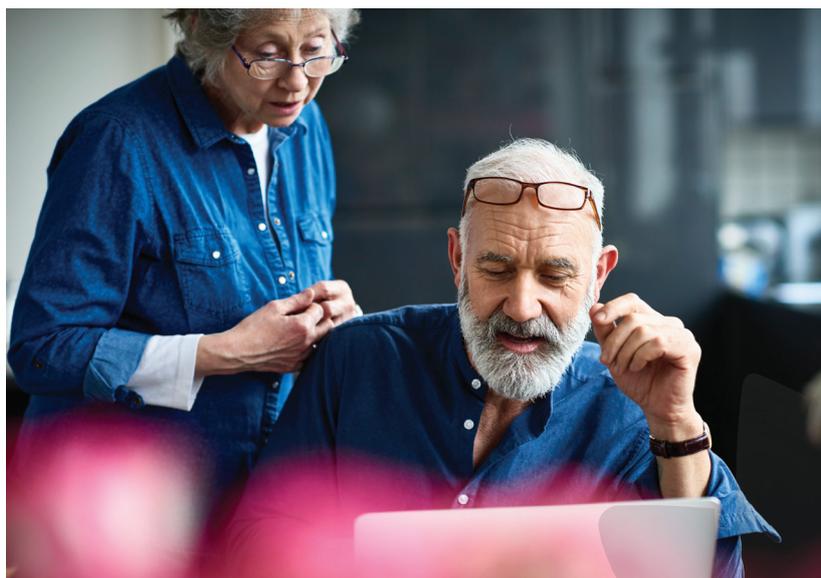
Some people have firm ideas about how they want to live the rest of their life, including conditions that they might find unacceptable.

Advance Care Planning can include one or more of the following:

- Conversations between you and your family, carer and/or health professional
- Developing an Advance Care Plan on your own or with help from another person. An Advance Care Plan is the documented outcome of advanced care planning. It records your preferences about health and treatment goals
- Appointing an Enduring Guardian. An Enduring Guardian can legally make decisions on your behalf about medical and dental care, if you lose the capacity to make the decision
- Making an Advance Care Directive.

Choosing who should make decisions for you if you do not have capacity is an important part of Advance Care Planning.

Capacity means that you can understand the information and choices presented; weigh up the information to determine what the decision will mean for you and communicate your decision.



In NSW, there is no set form to record your wishes

What is an Advance Care Directive?

An Advance Care Directive records your specific wishes and preferences for future care. This includes treatments you would accept or refuse if you had a life-threatening illness or injury.

An Advance Care Directive will only be used when you do not have capacity to decide for yourself or to communicate your wishes.

It is recommended your Advance Care Directive be written and signed by you and a witness.

An Advance Care Directive is valid and legally binding if:

- You had decision-making capacity when you made it
- You were not influenced or pressured by anyone else to make it
- It has clear and specific details about treatment that you would accept or refuse
- You have not revoked it
- It extends to the situation at hand.

Advance care directives made in other states and territories are enforceable in NSW

When would my Advance Care Directive be used?

- Only when you are unable to express your health care wishes
- To assist the 'person responsible' with consenting on your behalf.

Can I change my directive?

Yes, it is recommended that you review your directive regularly and following a change in your health.

What cannot be included?

An Advance Care Directive cannot contain instructions for illegal activities, such as euthanasia, assisted suicide or assisted dying.

Who is the 'Person responsible'?

In NSW, if you are unable to consent to a medical and/or dental treatment, the health practitioner should seek consent from your 'person responsible'.

The 'person responsible' is:

1. An appointed Guardian, including an Enduring Guardian; if none, then
2. A spouse, de facto spouse or partner where there is a close continuing relationship; if none, then
3. An unpaid carer; if none, then
4. A relative or friend with a close and continuing relationship.

A Power of Attorney cannot make medical or dental decisions for you

Where can I get more information?

- You may also discuss your wishes with your GP. Your GP or other health care professional can provide information related to your health and ageing. You may wish to include your family in this discussion.
- The NSW Trustee & Guardian has information about appointing an Enduring Guardian. They can be contacted on 1300 364 103 or you could visit their website www.tag.nsw.gov.au for more information.
- The NSW Ministry of Health's Making an Advance Care Directive package <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/patients/acp/Pages/acd-form-info-book.aspx>

What do I do now?

- Learn about any health and ageing issues you may have.
- Think about your values and wishes for treatment.
- Identify your 'person responsible'? Consider legally appointing an Enduring Guardian/s.
- Talk to friends, family, GP about your values and wishes.

For more information and resources:

planningaheadtools.com.au

or visit

www.health.nsw.gov.au/patients/acp