

Advance Care Planning Service

You Decide, Plan Ahead!

Advance Care Planning

Everyone has the right to make their own medical treatment decisions. However, anyone can experience an injury or illness that means they are unable to make decisions, either temporarily or permanently so planning ahead is relevant to everyone. Advance Care Planning provides a clear process for talking about and writing down your preferences for future health care in case you become unable to make decisions about your medical treatment. The choices you make through this process only come into operation if you lose that ability. The decisions you make now, will then guide your family and doctors to make the right decisions about the best medical care for you. The best time to do Advance Care Planning is now while your health is stable and you can think clearly about your wishes and what is important to you.

What does Advance Care Planning Involve?

In Victoria, one way you can plan ahead is by making an Advance Care Directive about your medical treatment and appointing a Medical treatment Decision Maker. These are two different documents and it is important to think about completing both. You can change either your Medical Treatment Decision Maker or Advance Care Directive at any time.

What is a Medical Treatment Decision Maker?

It is a person that **you** choose to legally appoint under the Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act 2016 to make medical treatment decisions on your behalf in the event that you become unable to make decisions for yourself or unable to communicate your wishes. It is best to choose a person who you trust, who knows you well, who is willing to respect your views and values and who is willing to make decisions under circumstances that may be stressful. A relative or a close friend may be a good choice. It is important that the person you select agrees to speak for you and that you have discussed with them what you would like future medical treatment if you were unable to speak for yourself. Make sure that your wishes are written clearly in an Advance Care Directive and that they have an up to date copy.

What is an Advance Care Directive?

An Advance Care Directive is a legal document made under the Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act 2016. In your Advance Care Directive, you can write either or both,

- An instructional directive with legally binding Instructions about future medical treatment you consent to or refuse. It takes effect as if **you** had consented to, or refused, the medical treatment.
- A values directive which documents your values and preferences for your medical treatment decision maker to consider when making decisions for you.

What will an Advance Care Directive do?

An Advance Care Directive will convey your instructional wishes and/or personal values, beliefs and preferences regarding but not limited to: care in case of serious irreversible illness; any unacceptable situations where you would not want life prolonging treatments commenced or continued; specific medical treatments you would agree to receive or want to avoid in the future; any non-medical or personal care wishes to be followed if you were suffering from the advanced stages of a life limiting condition and end of life care.

Why would I want an Advance Care Directive?

Health Practitioners need your consent before providing medical treatment. However, an illness or injury may mean that you do not have decision making capacity to consent to or refuse such treatment. If this happens, your health practitioner must make reasonable efforts to find out whether you made an Advance Care Directive with a relevant instructional directive. If you have, your Health Practitioner follows your instructions in the directive. If you have not made an Instructional Directive but have chosen to make a Values Directive only your Health Practitioner will ask your Medical Treatment Decision Maker to make the decision on your behalf.

Completing your Advance Care Directive will give you the peace of mind that comes when you know your future health needs will be met in the way you would want by Health Practitioners and your Medical Treatment Decision Maker. Having your wishes in writing can help your Medical Treatment Decision Maker and family remember your wishes more clearly and be confident to follow them without fear they may be making the wrong decision. It is also a comfort to them as it guides them to fulfil your wishes during a difficult time. Remember, it is only when your wishes are clearly known by those who will care for you that they can be respected.

How do I complete my Advance Care Plan?

If you decide to plan ahead, your next step is to contact Peninsula Health for a free Advance Care Planning consultation with an experienced health practitioner. An Advance Care Planning Clinician can give you detailed information and guidance to discuss and complete the necessary documents.

Phone ACCESS

Phone the ACCESS line on 1300 665 781 to arrange a face to face consultation with an Advance Care Planning Clinician.

Further Information

Information is also available online.

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/hospitals-and-health-services/patient-care/end-of-life-care/advance-care-planning>