

Sharing Your Wishes: Advance Health Care Directives

What is an advance directive?

An advance directive is a way to tell your family and doctor your wishes if you cannot make decisions or speak for yourself. A directive can include the type and how much medical care you want to receive. There are forms to help do this before a crisis happens.

Who should have an advance directive?

Everyone. Each person may face an unexpected medical crisis. Illness or injury can make anyone unable to make decisions or speak for themselves. That makes it much harder for family and loved ones to know what to do.

When should I do my advance directive?

Now. It is best to do it while you are able to think clearly and before a crisis ever happens. It is a good idea to review and update your directive every year.

How do I get started?

Your doctor, nurse, or social worker can provide the forms to begin.

Many people feel nervous about starting an advance directive. With the right forms and help from your care team, you can feel good about the decisions you make.

Can I change my mind?

Yes. You can change or update a directive any time. Your directive only takes effect if you cannot speak for yourself.

I have a directive in another state. Does it work in Utah and other states?

Each state has different laws about directives. Talk with your health care team to see if there are any conflicts with Utah's laws. If you now live in Utah, you should update your directive to the Utah form.

What is power of attorney or a health care agent?

You can have another person make health care decisions for you if you are unable to speak for yourself. You can give that person permission on a form called medical power of attorney.

The person you choose is called an agent. It can be a friend, family member, or licensed professional. The person should

- Be 18 years old or older
- Be willing and able to speak on your behalf
- Know you and your wishes well
- Advocate for you with your doctors and family
- Be willing to talk with you about sensitive issues
- Be able to make decisions important to you

When choosing a health care agent, think of someone you feel close to—someone you trust to talk with your doctors if you can't.

Does having an advance directive keep me from getting the best care?

No. Your health care team will give you the best care for the treatment you need. Advance directives do not limit quality of care, just the types of treatments you choose.

Who do I give the forms to when they are completed?

Always give a copy to the person you named as your agent and your primary health care team. Be sure to keep a copy in a safe place. You can also share the forms with anyone you feel would be helpful. Here are some examples:

- Loved ones such as children or grandchildren
- Your cancer care team
- Your attorney
- Your clergy person

Filling Out Your Advance Health Care Directives

When you fill out the forms

- Write clearly using black ink.
- Write your name and the date on all pages.
- Use your initials instead of check marks.
- Write your birth date on the first page.
- Cross out sections that you have left blank.

After you fill out the forms

- Give a copy to your agent. You may also give copies to members of your family.
- Keep the original form with your important papers.
- If you are a patient at Huntsman Cancer Institute, bring a copy to your next appointment.
- You can also deliver or mail a copy of your form to this address:

Health Information
Huntsman Cancer Institute Hospital, Room 2130
1950 Circle of Hope
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

If you have questions, call the Cancer Learning Center at 1-888-424-2100.

What resources can help?

A social worker can help you through this process. You can also find resources in Huntsman Cancer Institute's G. Mitchell Morris Cancer Learning Center:

- Visit the sixth floor of the cancer hospital
- Call 1-888-424-2100 toll free
- Email cancerinfo@hci.utah.edu.

These online resources may also help:

University of Utah Center on Aging

aging.utah.edu/programs/utah-coa/directives/index.php

U.S. Living Will Registry

<http://uslivingwillregistry.com/formslist.shtm>