

ADVANCED DIRECTIVES

Definition

Advanced Directives can protect your right to refuse or accept medical care if you ever become mentally or physically unable to choose or communicate your wishes due to an illness or injury.

Why have an “Advanced Directive”?

This protects your right to make medical choices that can affect your life. It helps your family by allowing them to avoid the responsibility and stress of making difficult decisions. It helps your physician by providing guidelines for your care.

What kind of situation might cause me to need an Advanced Directive?

IF YOU EVER:

1. Have irreversible brain damage or brain disease, which can affect your ability to think as well as communicate.
2. Have a permanent coma or other unconscious state which can leave you without hope of recovery.
3. Have a terminal illness in which you are expected to die within a short period of time.

What kinds of things can Advanced Directives Discuss?

1. **CPR** – A procedure is used to restore stopped breathing or heartbeat.
2. **IV Therapy (intravenous)** – This is used to provide food, water, and/or medication through a tube placed in a vein.
3. **Feeding Tubes** – Are inserted through the nose, throat or through a hole in the abdomen (stomach wall) to provide liquid food/nutrition when you cannot eat, chew or swallow yourself.
4. **Respirators** – machines used to keep a patient breathing when they are unable to breathe on their own. (Previously called “iron lungs”).
5. **Dialysis** – a method of cleansing the blood by a machine when kidneys are no longer working properly.

Advanced Directives allow you to state whether you choose any of these procedures or wish to refuse them.

How do I get an “Advanced Directive”?

You can make a “**Living Will**” or a “**Durable Power of Attorney**” for health care. You can contact an attorney to get one of these forms, or you can simply put your wishes in writing: be as specific as possible, then sign the document and have it witnessed and notarized.

Give a copy of your advanced directive to your physician’s office as part of your medical record, and inform your family that you have done so. You can also make special requests or statements regarding organ donations, etc.

Where can I get more information or help in preparing Advanced Directives?

- Any family lawyer or attorney
- The State Attorney General’s office
- The Internet
- Local hospitals
- Local hospice agencies
- Local home health agencies
- Long term care facilities, such a local nursing homes

