

How do I make an advance directive?

You must follow a few rules when you make an advance directive. These rules are to protect you and make sure your wishes are clear to the doctor or other health care workers. Any advance directive must be written and signed by you while you are able to understand your choices and make those choices known. In North Carolina, each advance directive should be witnessed by two people (unrelated to you and not a member of your health care team) and be notarized.

Are there forms I can use to make an advance directive?

Yes, you can get copies through the hospital chaplains, at the hospital nursing stations, or online at either:

- www.secretary.state.nc.us/ahcdr/Forms.aspx
- www.gotplans123.org/

When does an advance directive go into effect?

- A **living will** goes into effect when you are not able to make health care choices, and
- You have a terminal illness that will result in death in a short time, or
- You are unconscious and doctors have a high degree of certainty you will not wake up, or
- You have advanced dementia or other substantial loss of mental function.

The **health care power of attorney** and **advance instruction for mental health treatment** go into effect when you are unable to make or communicate health care decisions for yourself.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can cancel any advance directive by destroying all copies. Please remember to tell your doctor. You can change any advance directive by signing another one or by telling your doctor and your health care agent.

With whom should I discuss an advance directive?

You should tell those closest to you about any advance directive you have. Tell them about the health care you would or would not like to receive. Your doctor or another health care provider can answer medical questions. A lawyer can answer questions about the law. Some people also discuss feelings or decisions with clergy or other trusted advisors.

Where should I keep my advance directives?

Keep a copy of each advance directive in a safe place where your family can get to it. It is important that your health care agent knows the exact location of your original documents. Give copies to your family, your doctor or other health care providers, your health care agent, and any close friends who might be asked about your care should you not be able to make decisions. Keep track of who receives copies in case you decide to update your documents.

What if I have an advance directive from another state?

If you have a health care power of attorney or living will that meets legal requirements in another state, you can use it in North Carolina. If you live in North Carolina, you may want to complete an advance directive that meets North Carolina's legal requirements.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information about advance directives, please ask your nurse for assistance.



Content Contribution by WFBMC Ethics Committee
Produced by: Bethany Howell, Patient Education Coordinator
PEP112 July 2017, Copyright 2017



Advance Directives

Planning for Your
Future Health Care



A Mission to Care. A Mission to Cure.



What Are Advance Directives?

Thinking and talking about your health care wishes for the future are real gifts to those you love and to yourself. Letting your loved ones know what kind of care you would like if you became seriously ill can give them peace of mind. Having these conversations, and preparing a plan for future health care called an advance directive, can help assure that you will receive the care you want.

The following will answer some common questions about advance directives. If you want to learn more or would like to complete an advance directive, please ask for assistance. Wake Forest Baptist Health honors advance directives that have been properly signed, witnessed and notarized.

There are three kinds of directives you can prepare in advance. They are the:

- Living Will
- Health Care Power of Attorney
- Advance Instruction for Mental Health Treatment

We will ask you if you have an advance directive each time you are admitted to the hospital. In order for your advance directive(s) to be carried out as you wish, it is best to give us a copy to put in your current medical record. If you did not bring your copy, you can fill out a new one or you can “declare your intent” until your family brings your copy. This means your doctor or nurse will ask if you want to name someone to make health care decisions for you if you become too ill to make those decisions.

What Are My Rights?

Who decides about my health care treatment?

If you are age 18 or older and able to express your wishes, you have the right to decide about your health care treatments. If you have any questions about a treatment or procedure, ask your physician or nurse. You have the right to accept or refuse medical treatments.

Must I have an advance directive and what happens if I don't?

You do not have to have an advance directive. If you are unable to make your health care decisions, your doctor will ask another person (usually your spouse, adult children, parents or siblings) to make decisions for you. If you want someone other than family to make the decisions, you can appoint that person to make those decisions as your health care agent by completing an advance directive called a health care power of attorney.

The Different Kinds of Advance Directives

Living Will

A living will lets you state your desire not to receive life-prolonging measures in certain medical situations and when you have lost the ability to express your wishes. It is called a living will because it takes effect while the patient is alive. In North Carolina, a living will is a document that tells others (including your medical team and your family) you want to die a natural death if:

- You have a terminal illness that will result in death in a short time.
- You are unconscious and doctors have a high degree of certainty you will not wake up.
- You have advanced dementia or other substantial loss of mental function.

Health Care Power of Attorney

In North Carolina, you can name a person to make health care decisions for you if you are too sick to make them yourself. In this document, you name the person you want to be your health care agent.

How should I choose a health care agent?

You should choose someone you trust to express your desire for medical treatment. Choose a person who displays:

- Affinity — Someone who knows you well, cares for you, and who understands your condition and your wishes (what treatments you would want and what you would not want).
- Availability — Someone who can be reached easily by the medical team (in person or by phone).
- Assertiveness — Someone who is willing to express your treatment wishes to the medical team and to your loved ones, even if those wishes might be different from what the team would choose for you.
- Acknowledgement — Someone who understands the duties and responsibilities of being a health care agent and has agreed to take this role.

Advance Instruction for Mental Health Treatment

In North Carolina, this document instructs others about certain types of mental health treatments you do or do not want in case you are not able to make the decision. Mental health treatments you might choose to receive or withhold include:

- ECT (shock treatment)
- Use of medicines that alter the mind, such as tranquilizers
- Being admitted to a facility for treatment of mental illness