

TIP SHEET

WHAT MATTERS

Advance Care Planning



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What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance Care Planning is a process. It allows a person to express certain wishes related to medical care. These wishes guide medical care decisions if (and only if) the person becomes unable to make them in the future because of illness.

Advance Care Planning involves figuring out a person's own preferences, discussing them with loved ones and healthcare providers, and documenting them.

Advance Care Plans should be updated on an ongoing basis because life circumstances change.

Why is Advance Care Planning important?

Most people are used to making their own decisions about medical care. But, sometimes, because of an illness, a person cannot choose the type of care the person wants.

Advance Care Planning can help a person exert more control over the medical care the person receives if the person becomes unable to make decisions about care in the future.

Anyone can lose the ability to make medical decisions at any time. Advance Care Planning is therefore important for everyone.



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What can someone decide as part of the Advance Care Planning process?

A person can make and share different wishes related to healthcare as part of this process.

One important choice often made as part of Advance Care Planning is who should make medical decisions on behalf of a person if the person becomes unable to do so.

Advance Care Planning also often involves deciding what kind of medical care a person would want at the end of life. This can include whether a person would want to receive life-sustaining treatment, resuscitation, dialysis, chemotherapy, or use of a ventilator.

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How do I document these wishes?

An important part of Advance Care Planning is to translate a person's wishes into legal documents. Collectively, the legal documents used in Advance Care Planning are sometimes called "Advance Directives."

The types of Advance Directives available to a person, what kinds of wishes they can express, and how they can be created varies under state law. As a result, guidance from a licensed and qualified attorney can be an important part of Advance Care Planning.

After Advance Directives are created, it is important to share them with loved ones, caregivers, and healthcare providers so that they can be used if they become needed.

