

Discussion Guide

Talking with Your Family and Healthcare Advocate

Illness, accidents and injuries can happen at any time. That's why it's a good idea to talk about your future health care preferences in advance. An advance care plan allows you to express your wishes to doctors and family in the event you cannot speak for yourself or make your wishes known. Here are some things to ask yourself and discuss with your family:

- Who do you want to be your advocate (agent) if you cannot speak for yourself?

Below are additional characteristics to consider when choosing an advocate.

- ✓ Knows you well
 - ✓ Is calm in a crisis
 - ✓ Understands how you would make decisions
 - ✓ Can ask questions and advocate to your doctors
 - ✓ Can communicate well with your family
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- What does "living well" mean to you?
 - What abilities are so important that you couldn't imagine living without them?
 - What gives you comfort when you're sick?
 - If you are not able to make decisions for yourself, what should your loved ones know about you when making decisions?

Life-sustaining treatment replaces or supports your bodily functions when they are failing. When someone has a chance of improving, life support is used for a short time until the body can function normally again. For some people, the body never recovers the ability to function without life support or life-sustaining treatment.

- Are you willing to attempt life-sustaining treatment?
- When, if ever, should my advocate decide that it's time to stop life-sustaining treatment?
- What things would be important to you at the end of your life?
- What are your feelings about donating your organs to save a life?

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Talking with Your Doctor

Below are some questions you might want to ask your doctor. Whether you are living with serious illness or are simply planning ahead for your own or a loved one's future, talking with your doctor can help increase your understanding so you can get the kind of care you want.

CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR)

- What is CPR?
- Does CPR work?
- When is CPR unlikely to work?
- What are DNR orders (Do Not Resuscitate)?

PALLIATIVE CARE

- What is palliative care?
- Who is eligible for palliative care?
- How can I access palliative care services?

HOSPICE

- What is hospice?
- Aren't hospice and palliative care the same?
- Am I giving up on myself or my loved one if I choose hospice care?
- What might I expect from hospice?
- Where can I get more information about hospice?

ARTIFICIAL NUTRITION AND HYDRATION

- What is meant by artificial nutrition and hydration (ANH)?
- When is it needed?
- Is artificial nutrition and hydration effective?
- Will I or my loved one suffer if adequate nutrition and fluids aren't provided?
- Is artificial nutrition and hydration ever helpful for terminally or irreversibly ill patients?

AUTOPSY & ORGAN DONATION

- What is involved in organ donation? What happens to the body?
- What is an autopsy?
- Why should an autopsy be done? Why is it important to families? To society?