



Advance Care Planning Across Canada

Each of us is encouraged to think about, talk about and tell people our wishes for the type of health care we want to receive at some point in the future. This process is called advance care planning.

If you are living with a serious health problem or illness, it is even more important that you talk to the doctors and nurses providing your care, as well as your family and friends. The discussion needs to include these points:

- what may lay ahead
- what your care needs might be
- what might be the choices for your care
- the type of decisions that may be required in the future.

If you take the time to talk about possible scenarios with your health care team and your family, and you let them know your wishes about care, they will feel more comfortable and confident in making decisions on your behalf and guiding your care if you become unable to do so.

In addition to having these conversations, you are encouraged to write down your wishes or instructions regarding your health care. In the past, this document was commonly called a living will. Now it is more often called an advance care plan. An advance care plan may be considered a legal document in your province or territory. The actual form or written document may be given a different name, again depending on where you live.

Another important step in advance care planning is to choose someone you can trust who will speak for you if you are too ill to speak for yourself. Your doctors and nurses will look to this person to help make decisions and guide your care. This person is usually called your 'substitute decision maker'. Again, depending on where you live, your substitute decision maker may be given a different name, such as your health care proxy.

It is very important to talk to your substitute decision maker about what your wishes are for your future health care. It is also important to include in your advance care plan the name of the person you have chosen to be your substitute decision maker. Once you've chosen the person, written the name in your advance care plan, and completed the plan, give a copy to your health care providers, your family and/or your substitute decision maker.

It is important to know that you can make changes to your advance care plan at any time, even after you have given it to others. If you change any part of it, be sure to put the date and your initials or signature beside the changes, and share the updated copy with your substitute decision maker and health care providers.

The words used in health care are often confusing and overwhelming for someone who is ill, as well as the person's family and friends. The words used in advance care planning are especially varied across Canada. To help you and your family find the words that are used where you live, go to the link for your province or territory in the following list. It provides the common terms used in your area for substitute decision maker and advance care plan. It also provides links for more information about how you can record your instructions for future health care.

The website, [Speak Up](#), is a useful resource for advance care planning, and also offers [information for different parts of Canada](#).

[British Columbia](#) (pdf)
Advance directive

Substitute decision maker - can be a personal guardian (committee of the person), representative and/or temporary substitute decision maker.

[Alberta](#) (pdf)

Personal directive

Agent

[Saskatchewan](#)

Health care directive

Substitute decision maker - or proxy

[Manitoba](#)

Health care directive

Proxy

[Ontario](#) (pdf)

Advance care plan

Substitute decision maker

[Quebec](#)

My mandate in case of incapacity

Mandatory

[New Brunswick](#) (pdf)

Advance directive

Substitute decision maker - if the directive is prepared by a lawyer, the substitute decision maker is called a 'power of attorney for health'

[Nova Scotia](#)

Personal directive

Substitute decision maker

[Prince Edward Island](#)

Health care directive

Proxy

[Newfoundland and Labrador](#) (pdf)

Health care directive

Substitute decision maker

[Nunavut](#)

Contact your local health care providers, or the office at the link above for more information.

[Northwest Territories](#)

Personal directive

Agent

[Yukon](#)

Advance directive

Proxy

Content reviewed January 2023