



Advance Care Planning

Have You Talked To Your Loved Ones?

If an illness or accident left you unable to make healthcare decisions, who would do that for you? Think ahead. Plan for the end-of-life.

It is important to talk about and plan the kind of treatments you would want should you become seriously ill. It is most useful if done long before you need them. Planning might be uncomfortable at first, but it will help you feel more in control of your healthcare. It will also help your family and doctor to follow your wishes.

Step 1: Understanding Advance Care Planning

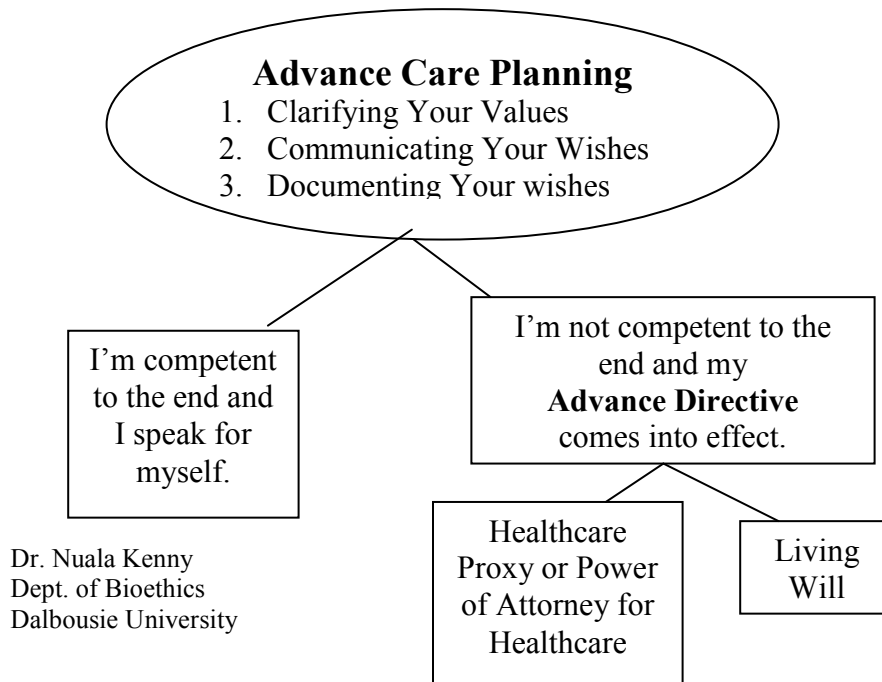
Before talking to your doctor, health care providers and attorney about advance care plans, it helps to know some of the basic terms.

- **Advance Care Planning**— This means preparing for a medical crisis and deciding ahead of time what treatments you would or would not want, based on your medical condition and personal preferences. This gives you control of the decisions about your medical care. By planning for emergencies, you will have less crisis decision-making.
- **Advance Directive**— A general term that describes either a living will or healthcare proxy (or durable power of attorney). These documents let you give instructions about future medical care in case you cannot take part in medical decisions due to a serious illness or incapacity.
- **Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) or No Code Order**— A DNR is a written order from a doctor. It tells healthcare providers not to attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if your heart stops or you stop breathing.
- **Healthcare Proxy (Power of Attorney for Personal Care)** — This is a legal document that gives someone else the power to make medical decisions when you are unable to. It can also be called a “durable power of attorney” for healthcare decision making or “healthcare proxy.” In New Brunswick, a healthcare proxy (guardian) must be legally appointed by you in writing.
- **Living Will**— This is one type of advance directive. With it, you let people know your wishes about medical treatment. It will then guide your family members and doctors in deciding how aggressive to be in using treatments to delay your death. Even though Living Wills are not legally acceptable in New Brunswick, it is a good idea to write down your healthcare wishes for your health care proxy and doctor.
- **Withholding or Withdrawing Treatment** – This means refusing or stopping measures that keep you alive.

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Step 2: Understanding Your Personal Values & Beliefs

Many of the decisions you will make will involve medical treatments. Your values and beliefs should guide medical choices whenever possible. You should consider what “quality of life” means to you.

- What is your overall attitude toward life—What do you enjoy? What do you fear? What do you value most?
- What is your attitude toward independence and control? How do you feel about losing them?
- What are your religious beliefs? Moral convictions? How do they affect your attitude toward serious illness?
- How do you feel about health, illness, dying and death? What experiences have you had? How do they influence your thinking about your own care and treatment?
- What are your feelings about doctors, hospitals and other caregivers?
- How do you want to be treated at the end of your life? Are there particular treatments that you want to receive or refuse? What fears do you have about medical treatments?
- What financial considerations would influence your decisions about medical care?

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Step 3: Planning Ahead

- Gather the information you need to make the right choices for you.
- Talk about end-of-life decisions with your family, friends, doctor, lawyer, clergy and any others close to you to help determine what quality of life and which decisions are important to you.
- Let your doctor know that you are advance care planning. Ask your doctor to explain treatments and procedures that may seem confusing before you make your decisions.
- Make sure your doctor knows the quality of life that is important to you and is informed about your wishes at the end of life.
- Decide who your substitute decision-maker (medical power of attorney or healthcare proxy) should be – someone you trust to make personal decisions for you. Ask if he or she is willing to act on your behalf. This person must be of the age of majority and be able to give consent to medical treatment. Make your care wishes clear to him or her.
- Write down what is important to you, your choices and wishes for the end of your life. Writing it down will help everyone remember what is important to you. Be as precise as you can about what treatments you want or do not want.
- Have your lawyer confirm your medical power of attorney (or health care proxy) in writing.
- Let your doctor know your choice for medical power of attorney (or healthcare proxy).
- Continue to re-evaluate your end-of-life decisions and choices. They may change with your experiences and as you age or your disease advances. Stay in touch with your medical power of attorney (or healthcare proxy) and your doctor.

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