

Health Care Directive: Putting Your Health Care Choices in Writing

Q: What is a health care directive?

A: A health care directive is a written document of your health care choices. Members of your care circle (family, friends or others close to you) and health care providers use this to interpret and understand your wishes, goals and values for future health care needs if you cannot tell them yourself.

It will help them honor your wishes, especially before a medical crisis.

Q: Who makes decisions on my behalf?

A: It is important to ask someone to make health care decisions for you if you cannot make them on your own. This person is called a health care agent.

Your health care agent should be:

- 18 years old
- willing, able and available to know and understand your wishes, goals and values
- able to make decisions under stress or crisis.

Ask if this person agrees to be your health care agent.

Note: A health care agent is not a “financial power of attorney.” This person cannot make decisions about your money or property.

Q: Do I need an attorney to fill out a health care directive?

A: No. You can fill out a health care directive on your own. To make it valid, you will need two witness **or** a notary public to watch you sign your health care directive.



Anyone age 18 and older should have a health care directive. This names one or more people who can make decisions about your health care if you cannot speak for yourself. The process is easy and you do not need an attorney to complete one.



Q: Should I have a health care directive if I'm healthy?

A: Yes! Everyone 18 years or older should have a health care directive.

Q: Should I fill out a health care directive if I have a chronic (long-lasting) illness?

A: Yes. This is a good place to list your health care agent(s), what kind of care you want, your wishes about the quality and length of your life, and what you want for treatment, including pain control.

(over)

Q: What do I put in a health care directive?

A: Your health care directive can include:

- a health care agent to make health care decisions for you
- alternate health care agents in case the first one is not available
- your health care choices based on your wishes, goals and values such as:
 - CPR (for restarting your heart and lungs if they stop)
 - ventilator or respirator (for help to breathe)
 - feeding tube (for nutrition)
 - organ donation
 - autopsy
- where you want to receive care
- funeral arrangements.

You may want to include other information in your health care directive as well.

Q: Can I fill out a health care directive online?

A: Yes. Allina Health offers an interactive, online health care directive. Go to account.allinahealth.org and sign up for My account, a secure area that can help you manage your health care goals, track preventive health recommendations and organize your family's health information.

Your health care directive can be as simple or as detailed as you want. After you print it and have it witnessed **or** notarized, you can scan it back into your My account and share that link with your health care agents. Give a paper copy to your health care provider.

Q: Can I make changes if I already have a health care directive?

A: Yes. You can change your health care directive any time. You should review your health care directive at least every 5 years or if there are:

- personal health changes (including new diagnosis or major changes)
- change with a health care agent due to:
 - death
 - decline in health
 - divorce, separation or annulment
 - no longer willing or able.

Fill out a new document, make it valid and provide a copy to your health care provider and health care agents. Ask that they destroy the old copy.

Q: Where do I keep my health care directive?

A: Keep your original health care directive in a spot where someone could find it. Give copies to your health care agent(s), health care provider(s) and members of your care circle.

Q: Can I fill out a health care directive if I live in Wisconsin?

A: Yes. Allina Health offers Wisconsin options in both the online and print health care directives.

Q: Is the health care directive I prepared in a different state still good?

A: Health care directives created in other states are legal if they meet the requirements of that state's law. If you set up residency in a new state, you should fill out a new health care directive for that state.

Q: Where can I learn more about health care directives?

- Go to allinahealth.org/hcd for a health care directive and guide for how to fill it out.
- Go to polst.org to learn more about POLST.
- Ask your health care provider if you have questions.