

Advance care planning

Glossary of terms

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING: A process and discussion over time where individuals clarify their goals and values, understand health care choices and options of care and communicate future medical treatment preferences, including end-of-life care.

HEALTH CARE DIRECTIVE (ADVANCE DIRECTIVE/LIVING WILL): Legal forms you complete to describe choices for future health care if you become unable to make these decisions yourself.

ANTIBIOTICS: Medicines used to treat illnesses caused by infections and to relieve symptoms.

ARTIFICIAL NUTRITION AND HYDRATION: Liquid food and fluids given through a tube put in your vein or stomach when you can no longer eat or drink.

DECISION MAKING CAPACITY: The ability to take in information, understand its meaning and make an informed choice using the information.

CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR): A life-saving treatment used to attempt to restore heart rhythm and/or breathing when they have stopped. CPR uses rescue breathing (someone breathing into your mouth) and chest compressions (someone pressing on your chest) to try to revive you. In addition, you may need medicines and electrical shock to the heart delivered from a defibrillator (machine).

Allina Health offers free classes to assist you in having advance care planning discussions and write a health care directive. Call 612-262-2224 or 1-855-839-0005 to register for a class.

COMFORT MEASURES/COMFORT CARE: Medical care provided with the primary goal of keeping a person comfortable rather than prolonging life. Comfort measures are used to relieve pain and other symptoms.

DIALYSIS: A treatment that removes waste from the body usually done by your own kidneys. Dialysis is needed when your own kidneys can no longer take care of your body's needs.

HEALTH CARE AGENT (PROXY): Your agent is a trusted individual chosen by you to make health care decisions on your behalf only if you are unable to make decisions yourself.

INTRAVENOUS (IV) FLUIDS: A fluid given through a small plastic tube (catheter) inserted directly into the vein.

INTUBATION/INTUBATE: Placing a tube down an individual's windpipe to assist in breathing. Intubation is needed for mechanical ventilation.

MECHANICAL VENTILATION: Mechanical ventilation is used to support or replace the function of the lungs. A ventilator (or respirator), is a machine attached to a tube inserted through the mouth and into the windpipe, forcing air into the lungs. Some people on long-term mechanical ventilation are able to enjoy themselves and live a quality of life that is important for them. For the person dying however, mechanical ventilation often prolongs the dying process until some other part of the body fails. It may supply oxygen but it cannot improve the underlying condition.

POLST (PROVIDER ORDER FOR LIFE SUSTAINING TREATMENT): A brightly colored provider order form used to write medical orders to honor life-sustaining treatment wishes for seriously ill patients.

TUBE-FEEDING (ENTERAL FEEDING): Delivery of fluids and/or nutrition by way of a tube placed into the stomach or intestines. On a short-term basis, the tube (nasogastric, or NG-tube) is placed into the nose, down the throat and into the stomach. For long-term feeding needs, the tube is placed directly into the stomach (gastric tube, or G-tube).