

A photograph of an elderly woman with short, curly, light-colored hair, sitting on a sandy beach. She is wearing a light-colored top and a grey shawl draped over her shoulders. She is looking out towards the ocean at sunset, with her hands clasped in her lap. The background shows the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow over the water and sand.

*Live Well — Finish Well*  
ADVANCE CARE PLANNING



## Your life, your choices

What makes life meaningful for you? It's an important question that only you can answer. When you take the time for advance care planning, you ensure that your medical care and treatment will be consistent with your wishes should you become unable to speak for yourself.

Advance care planning aligns your current health with your values, beliefs, goals, culture and relationships to determine how to approach your future health care needs.

Advance care planning is not just about old age. Healthy adults can prepare for sudden, severe illness or injury such as a car accident that could leave them unable to make their own health care decisions.

# A doctor's story

*An elderly woman with difficulty breathing was transported to the Emergency Department of our hospital. Given her level of consciousness, she was unable to give any medical information to the doctors caring for her. During the initial evaluation, it was found that she was in acute pulmonary edema (swelling in the lungs caused by fluid). To treat her, she would need assistance with breathing. Her doctors placed her on a BiPap machine to help her breathe better, and she was transferred to the intensive care unit.*

*The patient's son was contacted and came to the bedside. He had a copy of her advanced directive which outlined her medical wishes, including a desire not to be placed on life support. Thankfully, her breathing improved, and she eventually returned home;*

*but had her conditioned worsened, her son knew what to do. Fortunately, this story had a happy ending, but many do not. Too often families are ill-prepared for the decisions that must be made.*

*I cannot stress enough the importance of families communicating with each other about potential medical treatments – what they would and would not want – before an event or emergency occurs. Once you put it in writing, talk to your physician about your decisions. Advance Care Planning allows you and your family to be prepared and gives your loved ones peace of mind during an otherwise stressful time.*

*Michael Dunn, MD, MSA, FCCP  
Pulmonary/Critical Care Medicine  
Chairman of Medicine  
Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital*

# What is advance care planning at Henry Ford Health System?

Too many of us spend our last days in ways we would never choose. Henry Ford Health System encourages community members to have important conversations about end-of-life wishes while healthy or before it's too late. We believe that part of providing good health care is informing people about what their choices are and allowing time for consideration.

Our trained facilitators guide conversations that help you and your loved ones explore:

- **WHO you are:** What is most important to you, including your faith and values.
- **WHERE you are:** Your current

health and risk factors that could impact your future health.

- **HOW you want to approach future needs:** Considering different possibilities and treatment options for each.

The facilitator also explains how to complete an advance directive, which records your future health care wishes in a legal document.



## Including loved ones in the conversation

Perhaps the most important part of advance care planning is having a conversation that includes both your doctor and your loved ones. Engaging family or close friends helps them to understand, support and follow any treatment preferences that are made.

Advance care planning is not only a smart thing to do for yourself; it is a compassionate thing to do for your family. Making your wishes known before a crisis occurs relieves the heavy burden on others of making difficult and emotional choices on your behalf.

Often, families pursue aggressive treatments and put patients through a lot of physical distress when there is no hope of meaningful recovery to avoid making a tough decision. With an advance directive, they're able to carry out choices that you have previously made for yourself—and hopefully discussed with them in advance — so they're not left with guilt over decisions they are forced to make.

## What is an advance directive?

An advance health care directive is a legal document that spells out how you want to be treated if you become very ill and cannot speak for yourself. It can become part of your medical file.

It also names a “health care advocate,” the person you choose to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to make them yourself. A health care advocate

is an adult family member or friend who knows you well and can be trusted to do what is best for you. Your health care advocate should be someone who can be there for you when you need them and can clearly communicate with your health care providers about the decisions you’ve put in place through your advance care directive.



## Where to start

Your advance care planning facilitator will guide you through different scenarios to help you determine what is of greatest value to you and to match treatment options with priorities in a variety of situations.

### Values driven advance directives

- Life is of ultimate value.
  - I want everything done to prolong it.
- Quality of life is my ultimate value.
  - Do reasonable things to restore quality of life but do not prolong my life unnecessarily.
- Comfort is of ultimate value for me right now.
  - I want nothing done to prolong my life; I just want to be made comfortable.



Your decisions will likely be different at age 40 than at age 85. They may vary if you have an incurable condition as opposed to being generally healthy. An advance directive may be updated as you get older or if your viewpoint changes.

# A personal testimonial

*Serving as a chaplain, I have walked alongside many people battling chronic or terminal diseases. This time was different; the battle was close to home.*

*Mom was in her early seventies and full of life. Her hobbies included bowling, golfing, dinners with dad and friends and casino trips. Stage IV lung cancer came out of nowhere.*

*At first, the shock of the diagnosis was overwhelming. Finally, she and I agreed that while she couldn't control the illness, she could, to a large degree, control how she responded to it. We talked about*

*what brought her meaning and made her life worth living. We considered her future medical needs and treatment that would allow her to live the aspects of life she enjoyed most.*

*We also had difficult talks about hospice and where and how she wanted to spend her last days. Looking back, those were the most precious conversations I'd ever had with my mom. I grew to really understand this feisty lady who had raised me.*

*Knowing her wishes allowed our whole family to focus on living – and when the time came to make*

*decisions, we knew what she wanted. Mom died a peaceful, pain-free death with family at her side.*

*I guess that is why I now do what I do. While I can't change what is happening to those with a devastating illness, I can help impact how they experience it. Through thoughtful planning, a stressful and anxious time for families can be exchanged for a peaceful, precious time with their loved ones.*

*Jim Kraft, Director of Advance Care Planning and Collaborative Care, Henry Ford Macomb and West Bloomfield Hospitals*



# Questions to consider:

What is your understanding of your state of health?

What health problems do you worry you may develop in the future?

What scares you most about medical treatment?

Do you hold any cultural or religious beliefs or values that would influence end-of-life choices?

Is cost a factor in your medical care decisions?

What factors might change your medical treatment priority from trying to prolong your life to focusing on comfort while being allowed to die?

Who do you trust to be your voice if you can no longer make decisions for yourself? Are they willing to accept that responsibility? Do you have an alternate choice in case your first choice is unable to represent you?

What information is important for you to share with loved ones?

## **Compassionate care: A guide to life-sustaining treatments**

The better informed we are, the better decisions we make. These inserts provide basic information on common life-sustaining medical procedures, an explanation of when they are most effective and potential complications.

For some people, it is most important to prolong life. Others may only want procedures that could get them back to a good quality of life. Your advance care planning facilitator can answer questions and offer further details to help you make the best choices for your situation.

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*Henryford.com*

For more information about Advance Care Planning and how you can arrange a free  
ACP consult call: 1 (800) 532-2411 or email: [ACP@hfhs.org](mailto:ACP@hfhs.org)