

Honoring a Patient's Advance Directives at UW Health

What is advance care planning?

We'd like you to think about your healthcare wishes in advance. Advance care planning helps you think about and name what is vital to you. You, your loved ones and your care team will have a better sense of your healthcare wishes. Advance care planning will help you prepare your advance directives.

What are advance directives?

These are legal forms that allow adult patients to state their healthcare wishes. These papers let others know about your wishes. The papers can help guide your medical care in the event you cannot make your own decisions in the future. There are two kinds of these forms – the Power of Attorney for Healthcare (POA) and the living will.

The POA allows you to name the person(s) you want to make healthcare decisions for you. This is helpful in case you are not able to state your wishes, whether short-term or at the end of life.

The living will (statement to doctors) allows you to state your care wishes, if you have a terminal illness or you are in a vegetative state (permanent coma). Though the Living Will is a sound statement of your wishes, it should not be used alone.

If you wish to complete these forms while in the hospital, please ask your nurse or social worker for help.

Can advance directives be changed?

Your healthcare wishes may change with life events. It is important to reflect on what's vital to you and make updates as your life changes. We can help you complete a new form if you want to make changes.

Who makes medical decisions when a patient can no longer do so?

Patients who have a POA for healthcare will have a healthcare agent. Most often, this is a family member or close friend. When doctors rule patients can no longer make their own medical choices, the healthcare agents will be asked to do so.

What if I don't have an advance directive?

In this case, doctors may turn to adult family members to make choices. Being a family member does not make someone a healthcare agent. Your best legal option is to complete an advance directive to name healthcare agents who act as your voice. Sometimes family members don't agree about what should happen. When this occurs, a guardian may need to be chosen by a judge. This takes both time and money.

What are UW Health's policies on end-of-life matters?

UW Health honors patients' advance directives to the extent that's legal.

Adult patients who can make their own decisions have a right to refuse or stop all forms of treatment. This includes treatment that will prolong life, such as dialysis, breathing machines (ventilators), feeding tubes, and CPR.

At UW Health we do all we can to promote health. If your heart stops beating or you stop breathing, we will attempt CPR unless you and your doctor have chosen not to. If you make that choice, your doctor will write a Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR). If you do not want CPR, please be sure to talk with the doctor caring for you to request that an order be written each time you are in the hospital.

If you have a DNR order and are planning to have surgery, please talk with your doctor about the status of your DNR Order.

Some patients may ask their doctors to write an Out of Hospital DNR Order. Patients who have this type of DNR Order wear a special wristband when they are not in the hospital. The wristband lets emergency staff know of the patient's DNR wishes. State law says these orders are valid only in Wisconsin.

If a patient has an emergency in one of our clinics, the patient will likely be taken to our Emergency Room. Here, patients can receive or refuse treatment to prolong life and will receive comfort. All patients wearing an Out of Hospital DNR wristband will receive comfort measures only during transport.

The Ethics Committee can help patients, families, and members of the health care team talk about ethical issues that may arise. To talk about these issues, contact the Ethics doctor on-call through the paging system.

Questions?

Please talk with your social worker or UW Health Patient Resources at **(608) 821-4819** or **(800) 552-4255**. You can find out more online at uwhealth.org/ACP.

The Spanish version of this *Health Facts for You* is #6162s

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6162