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## Advance care plans

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### Summary

- Think about your wishes for future care.
  - Have the conversation with those closest to you, family and your doctor.
  - Consider appointing someone you trust to make decisions for you.
  - Write your wishes for future care down.
  - Keep a copy of your plan and give it to others.
  - Review your plan regularly or when anything changes.
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Advance care planning can help the people close to you and those caring for you to know what is important to you about the level of healthcare and quality of life you would want if, for some reason, you are unable to participate in the discussions.

Discussing and writing down your wishes for future care will help the person you choose as your substitute decision maker to feel more comfortable about the decisions they make on your behalf.

### A guide to advance care planning

It is recommended that you take several steps to make sure your wishes are known if you become sick and unable to make your own decisions. These include:

- Think about your wishes for future care.
- Have the conversation.
- Consider appointing someone to make decisions for you.
- Write your wishes down.
- Give your advance care plan to others.
- Review it regularly or when anything changes.

### Think about your wishes for future care

There are certain things for you to consider regarding your medical treatment and the care you would want. Think about what might happen if you couldn't make decisions regarding your care for some reason. Do you have views or preferences about your care that you would want known?

Out of the people in your life who are close to you and know you well, consider who you would trust to be able to make decisions for you about the type of healthcare and your quality of life. Think about what they should consider when they are making decisions on your behalf.

### Talk about your advance care plan

To make sure the things that are important to you are known if you get sick and decisions need to be made for you:

- Talk to those close to you.
  - Talk to your family.
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- Talk to your doctor and treating team.

## Consider appointing someone to make decisions for you

A substitute decision maker (also known as an enduring power of attorney (medical treatment)) can make medical decisions when you are unable to participate in the decision making. Consider choosing someone who is close to you, has a clear understanding of your wishes and can be a strong advocate for you.

## Write your wishes in an advance care plan

At present, there is no one standardised form in Victoria for a general advance care plan. It can be a form you complete or a letter you write. Your doctor and treating team may also be able to provide some advice about how to write down your wishes.

While at present there are no standardised forms in Victoria for a general advance care plan, one option is to use this [\*\*advance care planning form\*\*](#).

If you are writing a letter to your substitute decision maker, family and others involved in providing your care, make sure you:

- sign and date the letter
- have it witnessed
- discuss it with your doctor
- ask your doctor to write a supporting letter, if possible.

In some instances, you may wish to complete a Refusal of Treatment Certificate if you wish to refuse treatment related to a specific illness you may have. Your doctor needs to help you to complete this form.

## Give your advance care plan to others

Keep your copy of the advance care plan in a safe place. Then to make sure your advance care plan and enduring power of attorney (medical treatment) are found and actioned:

- Provide your substitute decision maker and family with a copy of your advance care plan.
- Give your doctor a copy.
- Send a copy to the hospital you most regularly use and ask for it to be put in your medical record.

Sign up to the Australian Government's personally controlled [\*\*eHealth record\*\*](#) where you can record the holder (custodian) of your advance care plan. For example, this may be your doctor or substitute decision maker.

## Reviewing your advance care plan

You can review and change your advance care plan at any time. You may be prompted to review your plan when your circumstances change. For example:

- if you have been hospitalised for a severe or ongoing illness
- when there has been a change to your condition or your health becomes unstable
- if you decide you want to refuse life-sustaining treatment
- when you or your family are enquiring about palliative care
- if there have been any medical decisions not to provide certain treatment.

If you decide to make any changes, you should discuss this with your substitute decision maker, your family, and

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your doctor or other relevant healthcare professionals. Give an updated copy of the plan to all those who were given the first copy so they are aware of the changes.

### **Where to get help**

- Your doctor

### **This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

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