

Talking with your doctor, other healthcare providers, surrogate decision-maker(s) and others close to you about your healthcare and treatment preferences is important. Starting these conversations can be difficult, however. The tips below may be helpful as you begin these discussions.

Talking with your surrogate decision-makers and others close to you

When you talk with your surrogate decision-maker(s) and others close to you, try beginning with these conversation starters:

- » We've never talked about my healthcare and treatment preferences, and I'm worried that you may not know what kind of care I want. I don't want you to be stressed if you have to make decisions for me, so I've put my preferences on paper and I want to discuss them with you.
- » My doctor says my illness is not curable. I want to decide what comes next, and what I want my care to look like. Let's talk about my preferences.
- » Ever since (a close relative or friend) died, I've been thinking about what I want as I come to the end of my life. I know it's difficult to talk about, but I want you to know my healthcare and treatment preferences. This is a gift that I want to give you so you don't have to guess about what I would prefer.
- » You know, the older you get, the more you think about things you need to put in order. For me healthcare is one of those things. I've been thinking a lot about this, and have completed an Advance Directives document that tells my doctors and my surrogate decision-maker(s) what type of care and treatment I prefer. I want to go over this with you so that you can help make sure decisions that are made happen in the way I would prefer.

Talking with your doctor and healthcare providers

When you discuss your healthcare and treatment preferences with your doctor and other healthcare providers, be sure to:

- » Ask for an explanation of healthcare and treatments options that may seem confusing.
- » Talk about pain management options.
- » Let your doctor know that you are completing your Advance Directives documents.
- » Make sure your doctor and healthcare providers are willing to honor your healthcare and treatment preferences and explore options if they are unable to honor your preferences for any legal, ethical or personal reasons.
- » Provide a copy of your completed Advance Directives documents.

Questions you may wish to ask your doctor and other healthcare providers:

- » Will you talk openly and candidly with me and those close to me about my illness and my healthcare and treatment options?
- » What healthcare and treatment decisions will need to be made, and what kinds of recommendations will you give to help me and those close to me make these decisions?
- » What will you do if I have a lot of pain or other uncomfortable symptoms?
- » Will you let me know if treatment stops working so that my family and I can make appropriate decisions for care at the end of my life?



Talking with others about their healthcare and treatment preferences

Even if you have done everything to communicate your healthcare and treatment preferences, you may find yourself in a situation where you need to talk with those close to you about their healthcare and treatment preferences. When you would like to talk to someone about completing their own Advance Directives document, consider the following:

- » **Select an Appropriate Setting:** Plan to have the conversation in a quiet, comfortable location where you can talk privately and without distraction.
- » **Ask Permission:** Asking permission to discuss this topic shows that you respect the other person's thoughts, and that you are prepared to listen to his or her healthcare and treatment preferences. Some ways of asking permission are: "I would like to talk with you about how you would like to be cared for if you got really sick. Is that okay?"
- » "If you ever got sick, I would be afraid of not knowing the kind of care you would like. Could we talk about this now? I would feel better if we did."
- » **Know What To Expect:** Keep in mind that you have initiated this conversation because you care about the well-being of the other person. These conversations are often difficult to have. Allow the other person to set the pace. Try to focus on maintaining a warm and caring manner throughout the conversation by showing your interest, love and concern.