

Planning for End of Life

With planning, you can have control over what happens near the end of your life. You can express your wishes about quality of life, pain control, and where you want to get care. You can also plan for the things you leave behind. This sheet offers information and resources to help you plan. Also talk with your care team for more support.



Care choices

You can choose the kinds of care you want, even if you have had a lot of treatment, and even if your cancer is unlikely to be cured. Talk this over with your loved ones and your doctor. Here are two types of care to consider:

- **Palliative care** focuses on making your cancer journey as comfortable as possible. It is aimed at reducing symptoms and side effects. You can choose to get palliative care at any point, even when you are getting treatment to cure cancer.
- **Hospice care** focuses on treating your physical symptoms in the last six months of life. It also offers emotional and spiritual comfort. You can choose to get hospice care when you are no longer getting treatment to cure cancer. Hospice care is given at home or in the hospital. You may also choose to stay at a specialized hospice facility.

How are palliative care and hospice care alike?

Both types of care:

- Are for people with a serious illness who want good quality of life.
- Use care teams that stay in touch with your doctor.



Write down wishes you have about the end of life.



Care planning

It is important to write down your care wishes. These tools can help guide you.

Advance directives

An advance directive is a legal document. It can take many forms. **A living will** and **health care power of attorney** are types of advance directives. Use an advance directive to spell out:

- Who can make healthcare decisions for you when you can no longer do so.
- What care you want if you cannot breathe, eat, or live without the help of machines.
- Visit www.caringinfo.org or call 1-800-658-8898 for free downloads of state-specific advance directives and a list of your state's requirements.

Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST)

A POLST form is a type of medical order that your doctor must sign. It explains your wishes to healthcare providers, and they must honor it by law. This includes emergency medical technicians. Talk with your doctor about POLST and your care wishes.

- POLST forms go by different names depending on where you live.
- Visit polst.org or call 1-202-780-8352 to learn about POLST in your state.



Financial planning

These documents help you say what you want to happen to your money and things you own.

- **A will** outlines what you want done with things you own after you pass.
- **A trust** is a legal tool to “hold” things you own. You can give things away from your trust either before or after you pass.
- **A durable power of attorney** gives legal authority to another person to manage your affairs when you are no longer able.

Put these documents somewhere secure, where you can easily find them. Tell a close family member or friend where they are. The person you pick to manage your affairs also needs to know where to find them.

- Advance directive
- Insurance policies
- Mortgage and title documents
- Birth certificate
- Social Security card
- Credit cards
- Tax returns
- List of computer and account passwords
- List of your assets and accounts
- List of your bills and debts