

Advance Directives: What You Need to Know

What Is An Advance Directive?

- An Advance Directive is a document that states in writing your wishes about what type of care you would want or do not want, in case you get hurt, sick or become unable to make medical decisions for yourself.
- On the form, you may choose an adult relative, spouse, partner or friend as your “agent” to make these decisions when the time comes.
- You must sign your name and write the date on the form.

Where Do I Begin?

- You can write or fill out your own advance directive if you are 18 years or older, and are able to make your own decisions.
- You do not need a lawyer to fill out the document, but it must be signed by a notary public or by 2 witnesses. Your “agent” cannot be one of the witnesses.



Choose A Person You Trust.

- After you choose this person, talk to them in detail about what you want. Make sure this person knows your wishes and are willing to make them for you.
- Talk with your doctor and “agent” about what you want and give them both a copy.
- Your doctor may ask you to sign a form that states you have talked to them about this document.

Can I Change My Mind?

- You may change or cancel your advance directive at any time, as long as you are aware of how the choices impact your health care. Being aware means you can still think and voice your wishes in a clear manner. You can also change your “agent.”
- Make sure that your doctor and your “agent” know about any changes.

Why Sign One Now When I’m Healthy?

- The best time to sign an advance directive is when you are healthy, and are able to think and speak for yourself. Having a plan in place will ensure that your wishes are followed.

Where Can I Get The Advance Directive Document?

- Most hospital emergency rooms and the Orange County Office on Aging have these forms. Call **1-800-510-2020** for more information. You do not need to use a form. You can also write your wishes down on paper and have this document signed instead.
- Contact Caring Connections at **www.caringinfo.org**.