

ADVANCE CARE  
PLANNING

# Healthcare Directives

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Park Nicollet®

**Advance care planning is the process of coming to understand, discuss and plan for a time when you may not be able to make your own medical decisions.**

Advance care planning for future healthcare choices is important to do while you are healthy and able to make your own decisions.

Thinking and talking about difficult medical choices may be uncomfortable for you. Even if you feel close to loved ones, they may not know what you want for future medical care.

No matter your age or health, writing your wishes in a Healthcare Directive is important. A Healthcare Directive is your written plan for future medical treatments. By writing a Healthcare Directive, you can:

- Make your voice heard so your wishes are followed
- Prevent confusion and disagreement among family members and your doctor and healthcare team who want to follow your wishes

Give yourself and others peace of mind. Plan ahead while you are able. Talk with your family and doctor and other healthcare team members to understand the choices you have for medical treatment. Let them know what your healthcare wishes are.



**Use this booklet to help** start your advance care planning and create a Healthcare Directive. You will find information on what a Healthcare Directive is and how to prepare one. You also will learn what a healthcare agent is and how to choose one.

Completing a Healthcare Directive form and choosing a healthcare agent (also known as *power-of-attorney for healthcare* or *substitute decision-maker*) are key to preparing for an unpredictable future. Other people will know what you want if you cannot tell them because of illness or injury.

**Before creating a Healthcare Directive,** think about what matters most to you. There are no right or wrong answers. Begin by asking:

- What are my values and beliefs about life and death, and the quality of life?
- Whom do I trust to make decisions for me if I can no longer make my own healthcare decisions?

Park Nicollet is committed to helping you with advance care planning and completing a Healthcare Directive. For more information or to schedule an appointment with an advance care planning facilitator, call **952-993-0190**.

*Your Park Nicollet Healthcare Team*

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# What is a Healthcare Directive?

A Healthcare Directive is the written plan you make for your future medical treatments. A Healthcare Directive also is the document in which you can identify someone to communicate your wishes if you are unable to do so—This person is your healthcare agent.

Other names for a Healthcare Directive include a *Living Will*, *Durable Healthcare Power of Attorney* and *Mental Health Declaration*.

## Medical treatment

A Healthcare Directive describes the medical treatments and life-sustaining measures you would or would not want should an end-of-life situation occur. You may specify if, how and when you would want to:

- Continue treatment to try to stay alive
- Stop or withhold certain treatment to die naturally
- Receive comfort care (medical or spiritual care) to experience a certain quality of life

## Healthcare agent

In your Healthcare Directive, the person you name as your healthcare agent can make healthcare decisions for you if you cannot make decisions for yourself. For more about healthcare agents, see Pages 8 to 10.

# Do I Need a Healthcare Directive?

No. However, completing a Healthcare Directive helps to make sure your family and healthcare team follow your wishes.

## What happens if I do not have a Healthcare Directive?

If you do not have a written Healthcare Directive, you will still receive medical treatment. Your healthcare team will listen to what people close to you say about your treatment wishes.

# How Do I Make a Healthcare Directive?

You do not need a lawyer to complete a Healthcare Directive or have to use a specific form to write down your future healthcare wishes. However, the document you create as your Healthcare Directive must meet certain requirements to be legal.

## What is legally required for a Healthcare Directive?

You must be 18 years old to create a Healthcare Directive. The Healthcare Directive must:

- Be in writing and dated
- State your name
- Be signed by you or someone you authorize to sign for you—You must do this at a time when you can understand and communicate your healthcare wishes.
- Have a notary public or 2 witnesses verify your signature

## Where can I find a Healthcare Directive form?

Common forms for completing a Minnesota Healthcare Directive are available as follows:

- Ask your doctor or another member of your healthcare team, or call Park Nicollet Patient Relations at **952-993-5541**

- Visit the Park Nicollet website [parknicollet.com/healthcaredirectives](http://parknicollet.com/healthcaredirectives) to access forms from Honoring Choices Minnesota—The forms are available in various languages.
- Visit the website [www.mnaging.org](http://www.mnaging.org) for additional forms

## **What should I put in a Healthcare Directive?**

You may be as specific or general as you wish. Specific statements, however, can:

- Clarify your goals for medical care for certain situations, such as permanent injury to your brain
- Help guide your healthcare agent or doctor and other members of your care team in making decisions about your healthcare treatment

Consider the following examples of items to include in your Healthcare Directive:

- The names of your healthcare agent or agents, and alternative healthcare agents, in case your 1st choice is not available
- Your goals, values and preferences about healthcare
- Types of medical treatment you would or would not want, including emergency procedures such as CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and life-sustaining treatments such as artificial nutrition and hydration (tube feeding) and use of a ventilator
- Where you want to receive care

- What to do if you are injured or get ill away from home
- Instructions about mental health treatments that use electroshock therapy or neuroleptic medications
- Instructions if you are pregnant
- Donation of organs, tissues and eyes
- Funeral arrangements

## **What should *not* go in a Healthcare Directive?**

You cannot ask for healthcare treatment that is beyond reasonable medical practice. (See “If your healthcare team refuses to follow your Healthcare Directive” on Page 12.)

You also cannot ask for assisted suicide.

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## **Healthcare Directives prepared in another state**

Healthcare Directives prepared in other states will be followed if they meet the requirements of the other state’s laws or the Minnesota requirements (See “What is legally required for a Healthcare Directive?” on Page 5.)

However, requests for assisted suicide will not be followed.

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# What Is a Healthcare Agent?

A healthcare agent is a person who will make medical decisions for you if you are unable to make or communicate medical decisions yourself. A healthcare agent makes sure your healthcare team follows what you specify in your Healthcare Directive.

A healthcare agent may need to:

- Make decisions about your medical care, including medications, tests, surgery or end-of-life care
- Choose doctors or other healthcare team members, or a care facility
- Review and release medical records
- Stop treatment, if in your stated wishes

# How Do I Choose a Healthcare Agent?

Your healthcare agent should be someone whom you know well and trust to follow your wishes, such as a family member or friend.

Your healthcare agent cannot be your doctor or another member of your healthcare team, unless your doctor or healthcare team member is a family member or you give reasons for choosing this person in your Healthcare Directive.

## How do I know a person would be a good agent for me?

Before naming a healthcare agent, talk with this person to be sure he or she:

- Is willing to serve as your healthcare agent
- Can make the decisions you want, even if he or she disagrees with them
- Is not easily intimidated by other family members, friends or medical professionals
- Can make major medical decisions related to life and death under stress

## How do I make sure my agent understands what I want?

To help make sure your healthcare agent understands your wishes, be sure to review your Healthcare Directive with your healthcare agent. You may want your healthcare agent to help you write your Healthcare Directive.

Be as specific about your wishes as possible. Sometimes people make general statements such as, “Make sure I am comfortable.” or “No heroics.” Your healthcare agent may not know what you mean.

# What Should I Do with My Healthcare Directive after I Complete It?

## Do I need to talk to my doctor?

Talking with your doctor about your healthcare wishes is important but not a legal requirement. Your doctor can check that your Healthcare Directive is clear and complete. Your doctor also can confirm if your healthcare team will follow your wishes.

## What if my healthcare team will not follow my Healthcare Directive?

As long as your healthcare wishes follow reasonable medical practice, healthcare teams generally will follow your Healthcare Directive or instructions from your healthcare agent. Healthcare teams cannot follow requests for treatment that do not help you, or may harm you.

If your healthcare team is unable to follow your stated wishes or your healthcare agent's directions about your healthcare treatment, the healthcare team must:

- Inform your healthcare agent
- Document the discussion in your medical record
- Allow your healthcare agent to transfer your care to another healthcare team or facility who will follow your wishes

## **Where should I keep my Healthcare Directive?**

- Give copies of your signed Healthcare Directive to your healthcare agent, your doctor and healthcare team, family members and anyone else you want to know about your future healthcare wishes.
- Keep the original Healthcare Directive easily available at your home.

## **How long does a Healthcare Directive last?**

Your Healthcare Directive lasts until you change or cancel it.

# Can I Change or Cancel My Healthcare Directive?

You can change or cancel your Healthcare Directive at any time. In fact, regularly reviewing and updating your Healthcare Directive as your needs change is a good idea.

## To change your Healthcare Directive

*For a few minor changes, use your existing Healthcare Directive and:*

- Cross out any directions you no longer want followed and initial and date each deletion
- Write in changes and initial and date each addition
- Give copies of your updated Healthcare Directive to all individuals who have a copy of your existing Healthcare Directive and tell them to destroy the earlier copy

***If you have more than a few changes or major changes:***

- Cancel your current Healthcare Directive (see “To cancel your Healthcare Directive” below)
- Create a new Healthcare Directive—Be sure it meets the legal requirements described on Page 5, including having a notary public or 2 witnesses verify your signature.
- Give copies of your new Healthcare Directive to all individuals who have a copy of your existing Healthcare Directive and tell them to destroy the previous copy

**To cancel your Healthcare Directive**

- Write a statement saying you want to cancel your existing Healthcare Directive
- Destroy your Healthcare Directive
- Give the statement to all individuals who have a copy of your Healthcare Directive and tell them to destroy the copy

# Resources

For more information about advance care planning, use the following resources.

- **Park Nicollet Advance Care Planning Class**

952-993-3454

[www.parknicollet.com](http://www.parknicollet.com)

Classes on advance care planning are offered at various days, times and Park Nicollet Clinic locations. For more information and to register, visit the website or call the telephone number listed above.

- **Park Nicollet Advance Care Planning Help Line**

952-993-0190

Call for information about advance care planning and to schedule an appointment with an advance care planning facilitator.

- **Park Nicollet Patient Relations**

952-993-5541

Call for Healthcare Directive forms and notary services.

- **Minnesota Board on Aging Senior LinkAge Line**

800-333-2433

Provides information, help and services for long-term care planning options, insurance and other healthcare issues concerning older adults.

- **Minnesota Department of Health  
Office of Health Facility Complaints**  
651-201-4200 or 800-369-7994  
For filing complaints if you believe a doctor or other member of your healthcare team has not followed Healthcare Directive requirements.
- **Minnesota Health Information  
Clearinghouse**  
651-201-5178 or 800-657-3793  
For filing complaints if you believe a health plan has not followed Healthcare Directive requirements.





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