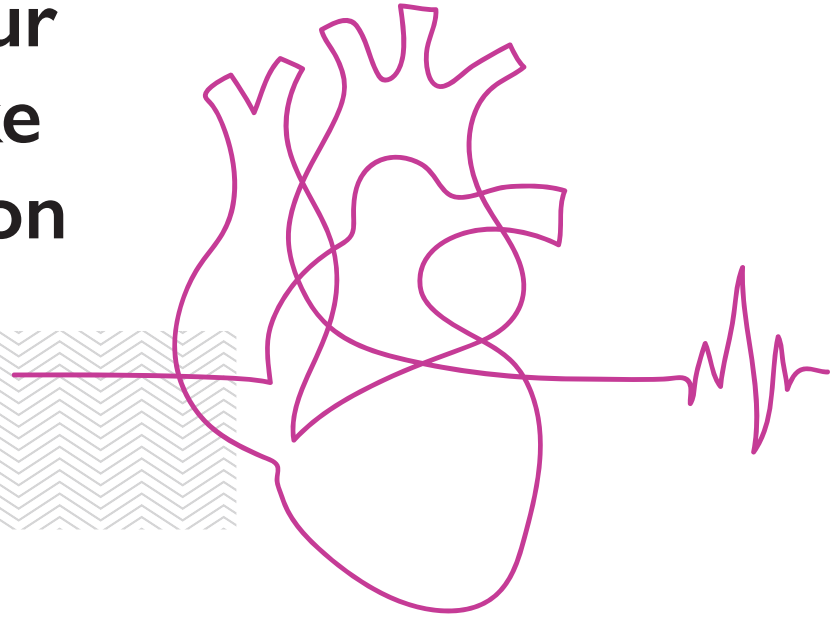


Take control of your medical care - make an Advance Decision



“Previously known as ‘Advance Directives’ or ‘Living Wills’, an Advance Decision is a statement of your wishes about your future medical treatment and clinical care. The title doesn’t matter so long as the document makes your intentions clear.”

It can guide your doctors and family as to your wishes if you become unable to participate in decisions concerning your medical treatment. Advance Decisions can be made by anyone aged 18 or over.

When does it come into effect?

Your Advance Decision would only come into effect if you had lost mental capacity, i.e. the ability to understand and interact with the world around you and to make decisions for yourself. So if you can still make decisions your medical treatment cannot be decided by others.

What can it cover?

You can state that a particular family member should take part in discussions concerning your medical treatment but you cannot give anyone else the power to take medical decisions for you. If you do want to give someone else that power you should consider making a ‘Lasting Power of Attorney’ which we would be happy to discuss with you. You can refuse food, nutrition and other fluids administered intravenously but you cannot forbid food or fluid being given orally. You cannot ask that positive steps be taken to hasten your death but you can state that life-sustaining treatment, such as mouth to mouth resuscitation, should not be used, even if your life is at risk. Your Advance Decision would have to be witnessed in that case.

Can I change my mind?

You can amend your Advance Decision at any time either in writing or verbally. But if you want to add a wish to refuse life-sustaining treatment you would have to make the amendment in writing and with witnesses present.

Must my medical carers follow my wishes?

If you are pregnant a doctor can override your written wishes if those would lead to the death of your baby at a time when the doctor believes that a viable live birth is possible. You can make your Advance Decision so as to come into effect only if you are diagnosed with certain specific illnesses. But you must be very clear, as limiting the Advance Decision in this way can often lead to confusion and make it less effective. If medical staff feel that, due to medical advances since you made your Advance Decision, you could not have anticipated a particular treatment being available, they have the power to override what you have stipulated.

Who should know about my Advance Decision?

We recommend that you discuss your Advance Decision with your GP either before or after you have signed the document so that they are aware of your wishes. You can make several copies of your Advance Decision. We recommend that you make two: one for your GP to put with your medical records and the other for a family member to produce promptly in an emergency.



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