

## **Advanced Care Planning** – Make your decisions known

Advanced Care Planning is not just for the elderly. Every adult should consider advanced care planning. Medical emergencies can happen at any age, and it is important for your loved ones and your medical team to know what medical care you want and what you want withheld. If you are unable to make your own medical decisions due to illness or injury, advanced care plans can help guide your family and healthcare team.

Before creating your care plan, it is important that you learn about what types of care and decisions may need to be made in the event of an emergency or illness.

### **Things to consider are:**

- Do you want CPR should your heart stop beating? Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is when someone uses chest compressions and/or machines to restore your heartbeat if it quits working on its own.
- Do you want to have a tube placed to help with breathing or be placed on a ventilator? A ventilator is a machine that can be used to help your lungs continue to work should you be unable to breath on your own. It requires that a tube be placed down your throat in order to keep your airway open.
- Do you want to have artificial nutrition? This means being fed through a tube or IV if you are not able to eat on your own.

There are many things that go into making these decisions and your physician or other healthcare team members can assist and answer any questions you may have.

There are also more than just medical issues to consider. Many people want to make sure they get to witness a significant life event. This might mean being able to watch a grandchild graduate high school or get married, so life sustaining care may be given to them until that event happens. It is important that you discuss these plans with your family so that everyone understands your decisions and why you made them.

Once you feel comfortable with what your plan is, it is vital that you write it down in an advanced directive. An Advanced Directive is a legal document that is written to go into effect if/when you should become incapacitated or unable to speak for yourself. The document is signed and witnessed while you are still of sound mind and is only used if/when necessary. This assures that your wishes are upheld. Your physician or other healthcare providers can assist you in filling these forms out.

You can alternately designate someone to make healthcare decisions for you or a Healthcare Surrogate. A Healthcare Surrogate is someone who can legally make decisions in your place. This should be someone you trust to make the choices that you would want made. Many people will designate a spouse or child, sibling or close friend. Make sure to discuss this with the person first to assure that they are comfortable making such decisions and that they understand your wishes.

Comfort care is often used at the end of life. When we have reached the end-of-life, comfort care measures can be used to ease pain or discomfort while keeping in line with the decisions you made about your healthcare. These are things like using medication to control pain and anxiety or to ease difficulty breathing.

Your healthcare team will discuss advanced care planning with you and answer any questions you may have. They will be happy to help with information about your health conditions that you will need to consider when making these decisions. It is not easy to have these discussions. No one wants to think about the end of their life. However, having these discussions and making these decisions in advance will ease not only your mind as the patient, but also your family.

Please ask us how we can help with this process.