Advance Medical Directives  
(For Patients 18 Years of Age or Older)

**What are advance medical directives?**

Advance medical directives are legal papers that let you tell others how you would like to be cared for if you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself.

**Who should have an advance medical directive?**

Any patient that is 18 years of age or older.

**What are my rights?**

- As a patient, you have a right to know about advance directives. If you ask, staff will be able to explain and answer your questions.
- You have the right to accept or refuse medical care.

**Why should I have an advance medical directive?**

- An advance directive can help protect your right to make medical choices. These choices can affect your life if you are unable to make your wishes known due to an injury or illness.
- They also help your family and loved ones make decisions on your behalf, and they give your health care provider guidelines for your care.

**There are two kinds of advance medical directives:**

You can have either one or both kinds of advance directives.

**Power of attorney for health care**

This is a written legal paper. You must name a person (called a health care agent) who will make medical decisions for you if you are not able to do so. This person should be someone you know well and trust. They will make decisions for you only if your health care provider determines that you are unable to do so (also called incapacitated).

**Living wills**

These are legal papers that tell your health care provider and others about the kind of health care that you want when you are ill and not able to make decisions. The living will takes effect only if you are dying or in a persistent vegetative state.

**What should I think about when I am starting to make an advance medical directive?**

**Let your values be your guide.** Think about what is most important to you. If you could not speak for yourself, would it be important for you to:

- Make your own decisions and not burden your family with difficult decisions?
- Act within your religious beliefs?
- Prolong life, even if there is little chance of recovery?
- Be with your family and loved ones at death?
- Die without pain and suffering?
- Donate an organ or part of your body?
- Let others know about the things that are important to you?
What medical procedures are covered in an advance medical directive?

You can limit procedures that would prolong life when there is little or no chance of recovery. These procedures include:

- CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation): Procedures that try to bring breathing and/or a heart beat back once it has stopped
- IV (intravenous) treatment: A catheter placed in your vein to give medicine, fluid, and nutrition
- Feeding tube use: A tube that is placed through the nose, mouth, or stomach to give nutrition, food, and water when you can no longer eat or drink
- Respirator/Ventilator: A machine that is used to keep you breathing when you are not able to breathe on your own
- Dialysis: A machine to remove harmful substances from your blood when your kidneys are failing
- Pain relief: A plan of care to give or not give medicines and treatments to relieve pain
- Other treatments or procedures

How do I make an advance medical directive?

1. Check state laws about living wills and durable powers of attorney for health care.
2. Put your wishes in writing, using an approved form. Be as specific as you can.
3. Sign and date your advance directive with two witnesses (not related to you) and/or have it notarized.
4. Keep a card in your wallet to let others know you have an advance directive and where to find it.
5. Talk with your family and friends about your advance directive. Give a copy to anyone who might be notified in an emergency.
6. Review your advance directive regularly and make changes as needed. Update copies you have given to others.
7. Make copies and give them to the person who will make decisions for you (your health care agent), your health care provider, and any other staff giving you care.

What if I change my mind about my advance medical directive?

As long as you are able to make decisions, you can cancel or change your advance directive by telling your health care provider and health care agent.

Can anyone stop my advance medical directive from taking effect?

No, not unless it is proven that you were not thinking clearly when you created your advance directive.

Who can help me make an advance medical directive?

- A social worker or chaplain (while at the hospital or clinic)
- A lawyer
- A hospital, hospice, home health agency, or long-term care facility
- Your state attorney general’s office
- Kansas Bar Association, 1200 S.W. Harrison, Topeka, KS 66612, (913) 234-5696
- Missouri Bar Association, 326 Monroe, Jefferson City, MO 65101, (573) 635-4128
- Center for Practical Bioethics, www.midbio.org/mbc-cc.htm, (816) 221-1100

If you want additional information, please ask for a social worker to be contacted.