



A program to help you make medical decisions for yourself and others



- Step 1** Choose a medical decision maker.
- Step 2** Decide what matters most in life.
- Step 3** Choose flexibility for your decision maker.
- Step 4** Tell others about your medical wishes.
- Step 5** Ask doctors the right questions.

Step 1 Choose a Medical Decision Maker

Choose someone you trust to help make decisions for you in case you become too sick to make your own decisions.

A good decision maker will:

- ask doctors questions
- respect your wishes

If there is no one to choose right now, do Steps 2, 4, and 5.

How to say it:

“If I get sick in the future and cannot make my own decisions, would you work with my doctors and help make medical decision for me?”

OR

“I do not want to make my own medical decisions. Would you talk to the doctors and help make medical decisions for me now and in the future?”



Step 2 Decide What Matters Most in Life

This can help you decide on medical care that is right for you.



Five questions can help you decide what matters for your medical care:

1. **What is most important in life?** Friends? Family? Religion?
2. **What experiences have you had with serious illness or death?**
3. **What brings you quality of life?** Quality of life is different for each person. Some people are willing to live through a lot for a chance of living longer. Others know certain things would be hard on their quality of life.
4. **If you were very sick, what would be most important to you:**
 - To live as long as possible even if you think you have poor quality of life?
 - Or, to try treatments for a period of time, but stop if you are suffering?
 - Or, to focus on quality of life and comfort, even if your life is shorter?
5. **Have you changed your mind about what matters most in your life over time?**

Step 3 Choose Flexibility for Your Decision Maker

Flexibility gives your decision maker leeway to work with your doctors and possibly change your prior medical decisions if something else is better for you at that time.

How to say it:

Total Flexibility:

“I trust you to work with my doctors. It is OK if you have to change my prior decisions if something is better for me at that time.”



Some Flexibility:

“It is OK if you have to change my prior decisions. But, there are some decisions that I never want you to change. These decisions are...”



No Flexibility:

“Follow my wishes exactly, no matter what.”



Step 4 Tell Others About Your Medical Wishes

This will help you get the medical care you want.

How to say it:

To your decision maker and doctors:

“This is what is most important in my life and for my medical care...”

To your doctor and family and friends:

“I chose this person to be my decision maker and I want to give them (TOTAL, SOME, or NO) flexibility to make decisions for me.”

Your doctors can help you put your medical wishes on an advance directive form.



Step 5 Ask Doctors the Right Questions

- Write down questions ahead of time.
- Bring someone with you.
- Tell doctors at the **start of the visit** if you have questions.



How to say it:

If your doctor recommends something, ask about the:

- Benefits** – the good things that could happen
- Risks** – the bad things that could happen
- Options** for different kinds of treatment
- What your life will be like after treatment**

Make sure you understand:

“What I’m hearing you say is... Is this right?”

Your Action Plan

Action Plan

By _____

I will _____