

**Advance Directives:
Making Your Wishes Known – What is an Advance
Directive?**

Narrator

No one likes to think about getting sick, or not being able to make medical decisions for themselves, but Scott and Nancy Nushart know how very important that is.

Nancy Nushart, Patient's Wife

When Scott got ill in 2010 originally, we knew that it was going to be a long road and that there were going to be decisions that had to be made. So, the social worker here at the hospital encouraged us to do the advanced directives right away.

Sue Moser, Social Worker

We encourage our patients and families to get that done. What's more important than your health and having someone to be your voice and to be your advocate when you can't speak?

Narrator

Advance Directives are **written, legal instructions** regarding your **preferences for medical care** if you are **unable to make decisions for yourself**.

So, what exactly is an advance directive?

Eido Walny, Estate Planning Attorney

Can be any number of a group of documents where an individual is able to tell medical practitioners some of their wishes with regard to end of life or issues affecting their medical standing when they aren't able to just tell the doctors what they want. So that can include things like a living will, a health care power of attorney.

Narrator

Every state has its own Advance Directive forms. While the content on each might be similar, be sure to only use your state's specific documents.

Eido Walny, Estate Planning Attorney

All of your health directive documents are documents that you control all the time once you execute them you can always revoke them and you can always change them.

Narrator

Before creating an advance directive, you should:

- Gather information, perhaps look for sample forms on the internet so you know what questions you should ask yourself
- Decide how you feel about different types of treatment – for example, would you want every possible measure taken to keep you alive, even if your brain is no longer working?
- Share your wishes with loved ones, and
- Put your wishes into writing

Eido Walny, Estate Planning Attorney

When you have those, that person's, wishes on paper and if frankly you've seen that paper in advance and can ask them a few questions about what they meant or how they wanted things to work out, that very difficult emotional question all of a sudden becomes easy and empowering.

The additional guidance that you can give to your family is going to be tremendously helpful not only to them but also to the hospital.

Narrator

Doctor Piero Antuono regularly encourages his patients to write down their wishes.

Piero Antuono, MD, Neurologist

I say I have it, I'm supposedly healthy but I don't know if tomorrow I'm going to be in a car accident. I don't speak for myself. My wife has to start talking about what I would like to be done in that situation. And the doctors need to know who is this other person. That has that wish from me express to have her make those decisions.

Narrator

It's important for anyone over 18 to consider having a medical plan in place. As Becky Higgins discovered, you never know what might happen, but planning ahead can help make a stressful situation a little less difficult.

Becky Higgins, Patient

When I was 19 I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. Did treatment through that and then again just two years ago unfortunately got into a relapse and was diagnosed with lymphoma.

My little sister is much younger than me and she was growing up so fast and becoming an adult. I realized how important it was for me to protect myself because I really need to be there to help her come into womanhood and live her life.

Sue Moser, Social Worker

I would encourage you whether you are in good health or bad health, young or old, to get an advance directive because it's the best way to make sure that your voice is heard and that you have someone that you know and trust that will advocate for you.

Becky Higgins, Patient

It takes five minutes to complete that legal document. It can really save you and your family hardships in the future if something were to happen.

Eido Walny, Estate Planning Attorney

Nothing could be more empowering than having gotten these documents done.

Narrator

Advance Directives: a critical part of your health care planning.