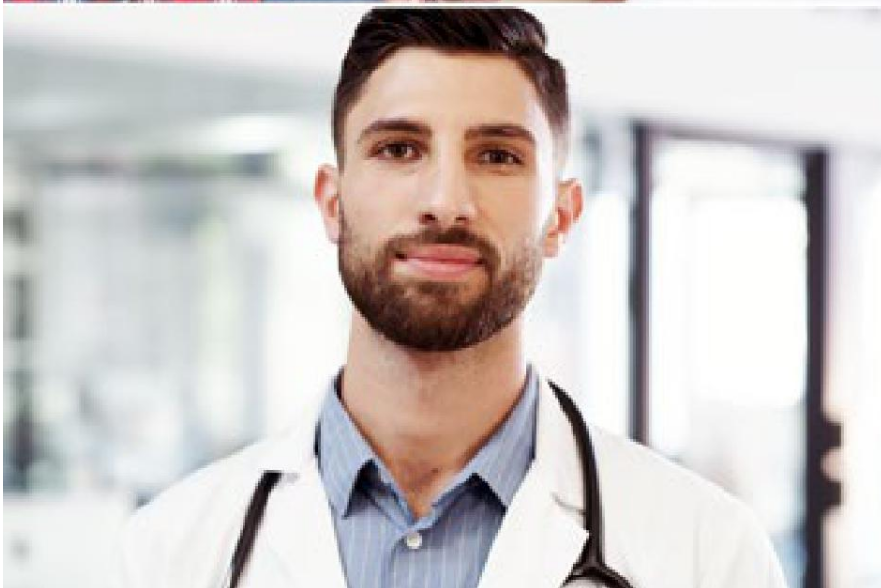




Advance Directives



Overview

These legal documents tell others what medical care you want to receive. If you lose the ability to communicate, they give others a clear plan to follow. These papers are important for anyone nearing the end of life. You don't need a lawyer to write them, but they must be witnessed. And, they become legally valid as soon as they're signed.

Living Will

There are two main types of advance directives. The first is called a "living will." It lets doctors know your wishes if you lose the ability to breathe or if your heart stops beating. It describes whether or not you want to be kept alive by other means. And, it says whether or not you want to donate your organs.

Medical Power of Attorney

The second type is called a "medical power of attorney." It names who would make decisions about your medical care if you can't. Choose a trusted family member or friend. Medical power of attorney goes into effect if a doctor says you're unable to make your own decisions.

Your State's Laws

Advance directives laws may vary from state to state. It's important to fill out the forms that apply to the state where you live, or where you expect to receive medical care.

Plan Ahead

Many people don't like to think about these documents until they're faced with an emergency. But, it's best to plan ahead. Fill out your advance directives while you are healthy. Talk about these issues with your loved ones. With a plan in place, you can be sure you'll receive the care you want.