

Your Guide to Healthcare Decisions

Advance healthcare directives are written plans *you make* about *your choices* for medical care and related wishes. These plans let your healthcare providers, family members or other important people in your life know the choices you have made.

Why do I need an advance healthcare directive? Writing your advance directive lets you control your healthcare decisions at a time when you are not able to communicate and make your wishes known. It protects your right to accept or refuse any care provided to you. Doylestown Hospital will follow your advance directive except in some rare circumstances involving pregnancy or futility of care.

When does my advance directive take effect? In general, your advance directive will take effect **only** at the time when you are not able to make healthcare decisions for yourself.

How do I make an advance healthcare directive? To be sure your choices are clearly understood, it is best to have a written directive. It should be signed by you, dated, and signed by two witnesses.

In Pennsylvania, there are two kinds of advance healthcare directives:

1. Living will
2. Healthcare power of attorney

What is a living will? A living will is a written record of the health care wishes you choose for yourself. Your choices will be put into place by your healthcare providers **only** when you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself and/or are either permanently unconscious or have an end stage medical condition.

What is a healthcare power of attorney? A health care power of attorney is a legal written record that names a person (agent) to act on your behalf. It allows your agent to make health care choices for you, and will **only take effect when** you are not able to make those choices for yourself.

Who should have a copy of my forms? You should give a copy to your primary care doctor, hospital, long term care provider, healthcare agent, lawyer, and any loved ones who need to know your wishes.

****You may change your advance healthcare directive AT ANY TIME.** It is a good idea to review your advance health care directive every year and make changes if needed.

Advance healthcare directive forms and more information can be found on the Doylestown Health website DoylestownHealth.org

Advance healthcare directive forms are also available from community programs and internet search engines.