



Step-by-Step Guide to



ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

WHETHER YOU ARE 30 AND SINGLE OR 80 WITH GRANDCHILDREN AND GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN, YOU SHOULD CREATE AN ADVANCE CARE PLAN TO MANAGE THE UNEXPECTED.

Major diseases and serious injuries can occur at any age. When they do, your doctors and family members may have to make decisions about what kind of medical treatment you will receive if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Advance care planning allows you to specify which treatments and lifesaving measures you want based on your personal values and health goals, and outlines your preferences in documents called advance directives. There's no time like the present to plan. Here's how to start.

STEP 1: CONSIDER YOUR VALUES.

First, determine what kind of care you want to receive during a healthcare crisis. For example, would you want cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), feeding tubes or ventilators used during an emergency?

You can also have a conversation with your doctor about your personal and family health history to understand any conditions you could experience in the future. He or she can help create a plan that includes considerations for those situations. These consultations are covered by Medicare and some private insurers.

STEP 2: DESIGNATE A HEALTHCARE AGENT.

Identify a loved one whom you trust to carry out your wishes if you are incapacitated. When you decide who that person is, he or she can act as your healthcare agent and make decisions for you when you are unable to.

STEP 3: DOCUMENT YOUR WISHES.

The Georgia Advance Directive for Health Care is the primary advance directive used in Georgia. You can use it to designate a healthcare agent and as your living will. A living will includes written instructions about your preferences concerning life-sustaining measures, such as artificial hydration and nutrition, CPR, comfort care, and ventilator use.

If you currently have a terminal illness, ask your doctor to complete a form called physician orders for life-sustaining treatment (POLST). A POLST details your wishes for lifesaving measures and is used by medical personnel in an emergency.

STEP 4: FILE YOUR DOCUMENTS.

You will need two witnesses to sign your advance directives. You don't need to have a lawyer involved or have documents notarized. But do share copies with your healthcare agent and physician, as well as your loved ones, so they can find the document if necessary.

STEP 5: REVIEW YOUR PLAN REGULARLY.

Your health and wishes will change throughout your life. Periodically review your advance directives to ensure they continue to meet your needs as you get older.

 **We are here to help! Call Archbold's patient advocates at 229.228.8086 for help with your advance care plan.**