

## Advance Care Planning – The Basics

### What is an Advance Care Plan?

As they age, many adults prepare for their death by writing a will to give their loved ones instructions on how to distribute the property they leave behind. In contrast, only a few prepare a document that expresses their wishes and instructions for how to care for them when they're still alive, but can't speak for themselves. This is an **Advance Care Plan**.

### What does an advance care plan do?

- Ensures your family and doctors know who you'd like to speak on your behalf if you can't do so.
- Ensures your loved ones and care givers know your wishes so they don't have to make health care decisions on your behalf without guidance.
- Ensures you receive the physical, emotional, spiritual and medical care you would want should you become very ill.
- Ensures you receive only the medical interventions you want.

**Your plan can be an informal document or recording outlining your wishes for either short term care or for longer on-going care.**

- What specific or general medical interventions you want or don't want.
- Where you wish to be cared for and by whom and under what circumstances.
- What you like (food, music, activities, clothing, etc.).
- What you dislike (food, music, activities, clothing, etc.).
- What you want your family to know about you and how you feel about them.
- What religious or other spiritual care you'd like to receive.

### Start the conversation before it's too late.

**Your plan can also include legal documents.**

- A representation agreement formally specifying who will speak on your behalf.
- An advance directive spelling out the specific medical procedures you do or do not want.

[Forms and a guide for British Columbia residents](#) are available online and can be filled out without consulting a lawyer.

You can also fill out an [online planning workbook](#).

**Vancouver Coastal Health** has information on [Advance Care Planning](#).

[Powell River Hospice Society](#) conducts workshops for those who want more information – [contact us](#) if you'd like to be informed about our next sessions.

More in depth resources:

[Dr. Doris Barwich](#), medical director for the BC Centre for Palliative Care, talks about the research around the importance of Advance Care Planning.

[The Conversation Project](#) is dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end-of-life care.

[Being Mortal](#) How do you talk about death with a dying loved one? Dr. Atul Gawande explores death, dying and why even doctors struggle to discuss being mortal with patients, in this Emmy-nominated documentary.

*Making an Advance Care Plan is an opportunity to consider your own beliefs needs and wishes and share these with your family and loved ones. By preparing with them for future possibilities, you offer them and yourself comfort and peace of mind.*