

Advance Directives are documents that help to protect your preferences for medical care in the event you are ever unable to communicate. These documents are called a **Living Will** and a **Medical Power of Attorney for Health Care**.

A living will – is a document in which you can specify the kinds of treatments that you would or would not want in a given situation. Many people have strong preferences regarding things like feeding tubes, breathing machines, CPR or resuscitation and these opinions may change over time, depending upon your own health situation. Some documents are very detailed and specific about treatments, and others focus on helping you to think about and write down what is most important to you if you were ever extremely ill so that those things will guide the person helping to make medical decisions on your behalf.

A Medical Power of Attorney – is a document that specifies an individual who you choose to speak for you in the event you could not speak for yourself, for example if you were in a coma. You should choose someone that you are comfortable talking about your preferences for medical care with and that you feel confident would be able to make the decisions that you would want made. It is recommended that you choose a single person and list an alternate as a back up. Your wishes should be discussed with anyone who may help make medical decisions for you.

Advance directive websites:

1. www.caringinfo.org
Caring Connections provides people with information and support when they are planning ahead, caring for a loved one, living with an illness or grieving a loss.
2. <http://www.agingwithdignity.org>
Aging With Dignity(Five Wishes) Detailed Advance Directives available to order online.
3. www.mydirectives.com
My Directives A website to create free advance directives online so they are available instantly when needed to healthcare providers and loved ones that you allow access to your site.
4. <http://www.virginiaregistry.org>
Virginia Department of Health online information regarding Advance Directives as well as an online registry to make Advance Directives electronically available.
5. <http://www.vsb.org/site/public/healthcare-decisions-day>
Virginia State Bar website excellent resources.

Once you have completed an Advance Directive Document, please consider the following actions:

- Let family members know that you have a completed will to live and where you keep copies.
- Make sure that your Medical Power of Attorney and back-up receive copies.
- Make sure you have had the conversation about your wishes with anyone who may need to speak for you
- Give a copy to your physician(s) and see if they can place it in their electronic medical record
- Fill out a Wallet card and keep it in your wallet next to your insurance card. The card indicates who your Medical Power of Attorney is, how to contact them and how to get a copy of your Advanced Directives
- Consider making your Advance Directives available electronically through your state registry and list this information on your wallet card