

Your Right to Know.....About Advanced Directives!!

What are Advanced Medical Directives?

They could be a living will or a durable power of attorney (DPOA) for healthcare. Either document allows you to give directions for your future medical care, should you become unable to make your wishes known. Advanced Directives protect your right to accept or refuse medical care if you ever become mentally or physically unable to choose or communicate your wishes due to an illness or injury.

Why are they important?

Because they are valuable tools! They protect your rights to choose, help your family to avoid the stress and responsibility of making difficult decisions, and provide guidelines for your physician.

What do they pertain to?

Advanced Directives often enable patients to make their feelings known about CPR, IV therapy, feeding tubes, respirators, dialysis, and pain relief.

What's the difference between a living will and a durable power of attorney for health care?

A living will is a document that contains written instructions that explain your wishes regarding health care should you have a terminal condition. It is called a "living" will because it takes effect while you are still alive. A durable power of attorney (DPOA) for health care allows you to name a person (health care agent) to make decisions for you if you become unable to do so.

How do I create an advanced directive?

You can contact your local attorney to have a living will or durable power of attorney (DPOA) for health care completed. You can also contact the Social Service Department at Ashley Medical Center for a free booklet to complete that will walk you through each section of an advanced directive.

What should I do with my advanced directive once I complete it?

Once completed, you're advanced directive should be discussed with your family or close friends. Copies should be given to your physician's office, your family and especially the health care agent you name in the document. Keep the original document for your records.

What if I change my mind after I fill out my advanced directive?

If you are a competent adult you can always change or cancel your advanced directives. Your advanced directive should be reviewed regularly to ensure that your beliefs and wishes are still consistent with what the document states.

If you'd like to know more about Advanced Directives visit the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization website at www.nhpco.org or call 1-800-658-8898.