

Frequently Asked Questions:

What happens if I do not designate a healthcare agent or complete an Advance Directive and I am unable to make decisions for myself?

Your next of kin will be contacted to make decisions for you. In Georgia:

- If you are married, your spouse will make your decisions
- If you are separated but not legally divorced, your spouse will make your decisions
- If you are divorced and have children over 18, your children will make your decisions
- If you have no spouse or children, your parents will make your decisions
- If you have a long time partner, have no family or do not want your family to make your healthcare decisions- you need an advance care directive to select your decision maker if you cannot voice them yourself.

If you have not discussed your wishes, your next of kin may make decisions based on what they would want.

I am young, why do I need to worry about Advance Care Planning?

Unfortunately, life-threatening events can happen at any age. You may have strong feelings about what treatments you would want. Alternatively, you may need to designate someone other than your next of kin to make those decisions for you.

I have a terminal diagnosis (or a progressive chronic illness) and my physician does not think I will live much longer than a year. I want to make more specific decisions about my healthcare treatments during this last year. What options do I have?

There is an Advance Care Planning order called POLST (Physician's Orders for Life Sustaining Treatments) that you can complete with your doctor. This document allows you to make decisions about your goals of care such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), pain relief, treatment preferences related to mechanical ventilation, antibiotics, nutrition, dialysis, etc. A POLST is the way a doctor orders your wishes to be followed wherever you are- home, hospital, nursing home, etc.

Where can I get more information about Advance Care Planning?

CLINIC: When making your annual wellness visit appointment with your primary care provider, tell them that you would like to discuss Advance Care Planning or Advance Directives.

HOSPITAL: If you are hospitalized, tell your nurse that you would like more information. They can contact a social worker or chaplain to visit you in your room.

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE: Contact Sixty Plus, a Piedmont healthcare resource for patients over the age of 60.
Call: **404.605.3867**

Piedmont Community Classes:

[www.piedmont.org/classes-and-events/
classes-and-events](http://www.piedmont.org/classes-and-events/classes-and-events)

Online Resources:

Copy of Georgia Advance Directive:

[www.piedmont.org/patient-tools/
advanced-directives](http://www.piedmont.org/patient-tools/advanced-directives)

Advance Care Planning Conversation Toolkit:

theconversationproject.org

Guide to completing the Georgia Advance Directive:

www.aging.dhr.georgia.gov

Communicating Your Wishes:

www.caringinfo.org



Advanced Care Planning

Making choices about the care you want when unable to speak for yourself.

 **Piedmont**
HEALTHCARE



Why do I need to make healthcare decisions in advance?

Imagine you have suffered a severe, permanent brain injury. You are completely unaware of others and your surroundings. It is expected that you will not regain your consciousness and remain in a vegetative state indefinitely. Your heartbeat and breathing are being prolonged with artificial life support.

- What would your wishes be for medical treatment?
- Who knows about your wishes?
- Have you discussed them with your loved ones or your healthcare provider?

A catastrophic life-changing event can happen to anyone at any time. An advance care directive can help you start the conversation and let your wishes be known if something unfortunate and unexpected were to happen to you. It will alleviate the burden of decision making from your loved ones.

It is as easy as

- ✓ Have a conversation with your loved ones and healthcare provider
- ✓ Fill out the document
- ✓ Share the document

Step 1: Have a conversation with your loved ones and healthcare provider

Here are some questions to ask yourself before starting a discussion with your loved ones or healthcare provider:

- What does quality of life mean to you and what gives meaning to your life?
- What are your goals and wishes for healthcare if you have an incurable condition that will result in death in a relatively short period of time or are in a vegetative state with no hope of recovery?

Step 2: Fill out the document

An Advance Directive is a free legal document that allows you to:

1. Choose a person whom you wish to make decisions for you if you are unable to make decisions for yourself (also known as Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare, Healthcare Agent or Medical Decision Maker). You can select two back-ups if you wish.
2. Record your goals and plans for future medical treatment in the event you cannot make or communicate these decisions for yourself including:
 - Autopsy
 - Organ donation or use of your body for medical science
 - Final disposition of your body
 - Decisions about life support devices, machines, nutrition, fluids, medical procedures, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and ventilators.
3. Designate a guardian if a court decides that a guardian should be appointed because you are unable to make significant responsible decisions for yourself about your personal support, safety or welfare.
4. Make it a legal document by signing it, dating it, and having it witnessed.

Witnesses cannot be:

- The person selected to be your healthcare agent.
- Anyone who will knowingly financially benefit from your death.
- Anyone who is directly involved in your healthcare.

Step 3: Share the document

Make several copies of your signed and completed document and give them to:

- Your named healthcare agent and medical decision makers.
 - All healthcare providers and/or institutions from which you receive care.*
 - Anyone who needs to know your wishes (i.e. family, friends).
- *If you give a copy to your Piedmont provider or Piedmont Hospital, your Advance Directive will be filed in your electronic medical record so that all of your Piedmont providers may access and view your wishes.

Other things you should know:

- You do NOT need an attorney to complete an Advance Directive.
- You do NOT need a notary.
- Once witnessed, the Advance Directive becomes a legal document.
- If hospitalized, hospital staff will verify with you the copy that is on file.
- The medical community will follow the most recent one you have completed.

Advance Care planning is a process and should start when you are an adult.

- At age 18 or older, designate a Healthcare Agent
- Revisit your decisions and goals as your life progresses.
- If your wishes change, you can create a new advance directive at any time.
- If you change your advance directive, be sure to give updated copies to the people listed above.