

Advance Health Care Directive

Name _____

Date _____

WHAT IS AN ADVANCE HEALTH DIRECTIVE?

AN ADVANCE HEALTH DIRECTIVE (AHD) IS A DOCUMENT THAT STATES YOUR WISHES OR DIRECTIONS REGARDING YOUR FUTURE HEALTH CARE FOR VARIOUS MEDICAL CONDITIONS. IT COMES INTO EFFECT ONLY IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS.

You may wish your directive to apply at any time when you are unable to decide for yourself or only if you are terminally ill.

Every competent adult has the legal right to accept or refuse any recommended health care. Unfortunately, during severe illness people are often unconscious or otherwise unable to communicate their wishes. An AHD gives you the power to make your wishes known, while you are still able to communicate.

Before making an AHD you need to think clearly about what you would want your medical treatment to achieve, if you become ill. For example, if treatment could prolong your life, what level of quality of life would be acceptable to you? For example, if you were in a persistent vegetative state would you want ventilation and/or artificial hydration and nutrition?

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN AHD AND ENDURING POWER OF ATTORNEY?

An Attorney under an Enduring Power of Attorney can make any of the decisions contained in an AHD. Their choice will be based on information available to them at the time and their understanding of your wishes. Their decision could be contrary to your wishes.

An AHD directs your Doctor and Attorney as to the decisions that are to be made. Your Attorney and/or Doctor cannot contradict your directions in the AHD.

However, the AHD cannot anticipate every medical decision that needs to be made. In this case, you still need an Enduring Power of Attorney to appoint someone to make health care decisions on your behalf.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I UPDATE MY AHD?

You can change an AHD as many times as you like, so long as you are mentally capable of doing so. You should review your AHD every two years to review your wishes and advances in medical treatment. You should also review your AHD if your health changes significantly.

WHO SHOULD I DISCUSS MY AHD WITH?

As your Doctor must complete a section of the document, you can ask him/her to help you.

Your Doctor can explain any medical terms that you are unclear about. You may also wish to discuss your decisions with family members and close friends.

You should keep the AHD in a safe place and give a copy to your Doctor, your Attorney (under an Enduring Power of Attorney) and to a family or friend. You may also wish to carry a card in your purse or wallet stating that you have made an AHD and where it can be found.

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