

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning is a process of reflection and communication, a time for you to reflect on your values and wishes, and to let others know your future health and personal care preferences in the event that you become incapable of consenting to or refusing treatment or other care.

Advance care planning means having discussions with family and friends, especially your [Substitute Decision Maker](#) – the person who will speak for you when you cannot. It may also include writing down your wishes, and may even involve talking with healthcare providers and financial and legal professionals.

You may never need your advance care plan – but if you do, you'll be glad that it's there and that you have had these conversations, to make sure that your voice is heard when you cannot speak for yourself.

The Nova Scotia Hospice Palliative Care Association is pleased to provide a series of resources to assist with advance care planning process. It is recommended that in addition to reviewing and or utilizing some of the resources below that you discuss the process with those close to you, your medical professional and/or legal professional to ensure that you have the supports needed for your specific situation.

Why do Advance Care Planning?

- Research indicates that patients who have end-of-life conversations with their doctors and family members are much more likely to be satisfied with their care, will require fewer aggressive interventions at the end of life, place less of a strain on caregivers and are more likely to take advantage of hospice resources or die at home.
- A 2008 study found that the absence of advance care planning, in all its forms, was associated with worse patients' ratings of quality of life in the terminal phase of the illness and worse ratings of satisfaction by the family during the terminal illness or in the months that follow death.
- A 2010 Canadian study of hospitalized, elderly patients identified that providing more support for end-of-life conversations and advance care planning will have a large positive impact on improving end-of-life care in Canada.

For more information and resources on Advance Care Planning, visit <http://nshpca.ca/resources>