

# Talking About Your Illness With Your Health Care Team

Advance Care Planning and  
Serious Illness Conversations



This booklet is meant to help you talk with your health care team (doctor, specialist, nurse practitioner, nurse, social worker and other professionals) about your illness and the future.

Talking about your illness with your health care team will help them understand what is important to you. It will also help them support you and your decisions.

You can use the words in this guide, or use your own words – whatever is easier for you.

### **Start the conversation with your health care team**

---

*I've heard about the importance of planning ahead and being prepared if I become sick.*

*I've heard about different forms, I need help understanding all of it.*

*I've thought about what matters most to me.*

*I need some help talking with my family and friends about my health.*

### **Check in with your health care team**

---

#### **Understanding**

*I want to know about my illness and what is likely to be ahead.*

*Would you share with me what you think is going on with my health and what may happen in the future?*

*Will this become life threatening?*

*What treatments may be offered to me in 1 year or two years? Will I need life support or life-prolonging treatments?*

#### **Information**

*What information can you give me to help me make decisions about my future?*

*Which of my health conditions are easily treatable? Which are not?*

*How might the proposed treatments improve or worsen my daily life as I know it now? Will the proposed treatments require time in hospital?*

*Or can I get those at home?*

## Share what is important to you

---

*I'd like to now share with you how I make decisions and who I want involved. When my health gets worse, these main topics describe my thoughts and feelings about the care I would want.*

### Goals and wishes

*When my health worsens, the goals that are most important to me are:*

Examples: Meeting my new grandchild, celebrating my next birthday, finishing up a project, getting in touch with friends and family, having a good quality of life rather than prolonging it.

### Fears and worries

*My biggest fears and worries about my future with this illness are:*

Examples: Not being able to make decisions for myself, having to ask others for help with basic needs, not being able to breathe, needing to live in care, having memory problems.

### Abilities

*I can't imagine not being able to do certain things...these are:*

Examples: Not being able to recognize or interact with people, not being able to care for myself, not being able to get outside or travel.

### Tough choices

*If my health continues to get worse, I know that we may have to choose between treatments that are hard to go through but may give me more time - quality of life vs prolonging life.*

Examples: having a feeding tube, being on a breathing machine, more chemotherapy; Some treatments may mean I'm in the hospital a long time when I want to be home, others that I may need to live in a care home, etc.

*Here's what I think about those choices...*

## Plan to talk again

---

*Are there other people I should talk with?*

*What kinds of forms do I need to have to make sure the health care team honors my wishes?*

*Who should I give copies of my planning forms to?*

## For more information

---

To learn more about Advance Care Planning and decision making, visit:

- [Montgomery Hospice](http://www.montgomeryhospice.org/acp)  
[www.montgomeryhospice.org/acp](http://www.montgomeryhospice.org/acp)
- [Maryland Advance Directive](http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/HealthPolicy/advance-directives.aspx)  
[www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/HealthPolicy/advance-directives.aspx](http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/HealthPolicy/advance-directives.aspx)
- [NHPCO - Advance Directives](http://www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/advance-care-planning/advance-directives)  
[www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/advance-care-planning/advance-directives](http://www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/advance-care-planning/advance-directives)

Talk often with your health care team  
as your health and wishes change.



---

Adapted with permission from Fraser Health Authority, B.C., Canada [www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca) including content adapted from © 2016, Ariadne Labs: A Joint Center for Health Systems Innovation ([ariadnelabs.org](http://ariadnelabs.org)) and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Licensed under the Creative Commons attribution CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.