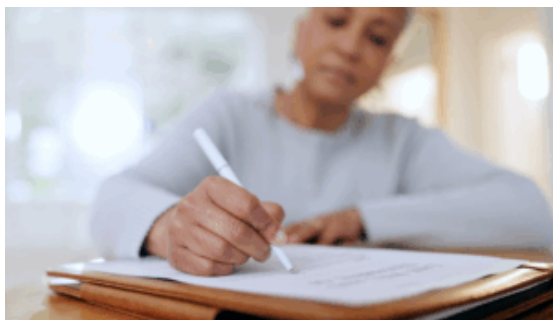


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Do you need an advance directive?



An advance directive is one of the most important planning documents you can create to ensure your healthcare wishes are followed if you can't speak for yourself. Don't wait for illness or old age to make one! Putting your wishes in writing now means that if an accident or sudden health event occurs, your values guide your care. An advance directive serves not only end-of-life decisions. It provides clarity and eases the emotional burden on those who care about you.

An advance directive is a legal document with two sections. Together, they give you a voice in your care and protect your independence while ensuring your choices reflect what matters most to you. No attorney is required to complete one.

- The **healthcare power of attorney** names the person(s) you trust to make medical decisions on your behalf if you're unable to do so.
- The **living will** spells out what kinds of medical treatments you would or would not want, such as life support, ventilation, or feeding tubes.

What to include in your directive? Include preferences about life-prolonging measures, pain control, hydration, and antibiotics. Indicate where you'd want care—home, hospital, or hospice—and whether you wish to donate organs or your body for research. Note any implanted medical devices such as pacemakers, defibrillators, or insulin pumps and whether you'd want them turned off or continued during serious illness. Specific instructions reduce stress for loved ones who may have to act for you.

State rules and related documents. Advance directives are recognized nationwide, but the details differ by state. In some states, two doctors must confirm your incapacity and the condition that triggers the directive. If you live or spend time in more than one state, complete the preferred form for each to ensure your wishes are honored everywhere you receive care. If you're already living with a serious illness, consider obtaining a POLST (Portable Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment), which is a medical order signed by your clinician that turns your wishes into actionable treatment instructions. It tells emergency responders exactly what you'd want done in a crisis situation.

Important conversations and options. Talk with your decision maker and loved ones about what matters most. Update your directive every ten years or whenever a life-changing event occurs. Again, no attorney is necessary. Consider adding a *dementia directive*, outlining what you'd want if given that diagnosis. You might also record a *video directive* to express your wishes in your own words. After completing your documents, don't store them away! Give copies to your healthcare agent, physician, and family. There are also digital tools and apps that help make storage and updates easier, if you are tech-savvy.

**Need help making sure all your bases are covered as you age?
Give us a call at 206-456-5155.**



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Aging Wisdom supports individuals and families in King and south Snohomish Counties as they plan for aging.



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