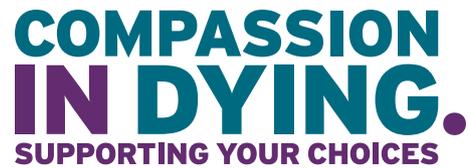


Information Line: 0800 999 2434

Website: compassionindying.org.uk



Advance Decisions (Living Wills): Reviewing and updating

This factsheet explains why it is a good idea to regularly review and update your Advance Decision, and how to do it. It applies to people living in England and Wales. If you live in Scotland or Northern Ireland, or if you would like more information about planning ahead for your future care and treatment, please contact us.

Why should I review and/or update my Advance Decision?

If your Advance Decision includes a refusal of life-sustaining treatment then the healthcare professional treating you has to be sure that it is both ‘valid’ and ‘applicable’. An Advance Decision made a long time ago is not automatically invalid or inapplicable, but it may raise doubts about whether or not it still reflects your wishes. This may then cause a healthcare professional to question it.

An Advance Decision that is regularly reviewed and/or updated is more likely to be valid and applicable to your current circumstances. This means that, if you lose capacity to make a decision for yourself, the healthcare professional treating you can be confident that what you have said in your Advance Decision is still what you want.

When should I review my Advance Decision?

It is a good idea to review and/or update your Advance Decision every two years, even if your health is stable. You can review your Advance Decision at any time, but it is especially important to do it in the following situations:

- You have been diagnosed with an illness or your health has changed.
- You are going into hospital for treatment or surgery.
- New medical treatments have been developed for any illnesses that you have.
- You have had a change in personal circumstances, for example, becoming pregnant.
- You have not reviewed your Advance Decision in at least two years.
- You have an old Living Will or an Advance Decision made before 2007.
- You have moved house or changed doctor.
- You have made a Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Welfare (LPA). If you have made both an LPA and an Advance Decision, see our factsheet *Advance Decisions and LPA for Health and Welfare* for more information.
- You have changed your mind about anything within your Advance Decision.

How do I update my Advance Decision?

Read through the document to see if it still reflects your wishes, or if you would like to make any changes.

If you are happy with it and do not want to make any changes:

1. Sign and date your Advance Decision next to the phrase 'I have reviewed this Advance Decision and confirm that what is written reflects my wishes.' Compassion in Dying's Advance Decision form has space to do this.
2. Give updated versions to everyone who has a copy of your original Advance Decision, including your GP, and ask them to destroy the old copies.

If you want to make changes to your Advance Decision:

- **If you would like to change the decisions in your form** then it is a good idea to make a new one. If you make changes to the existing form, it could make it hard for people to read. Filling out a new form will ensure that your wishes are clear and easy to follow. We can send you a new Advance Decision form or you can make a new one online (details are at the end of this factsheet).
- **If you are only updating your contact details or the details of your GP**, you can simply cross out the old information and write in any new details. You need to sign and date the change. You do not need to fill out a new form.

You can also cancel your Advance Decision if you wish. You can do this verbally, but to avoid any doubt, it is a good idea to destroy your form and tell anyone who has a copy to do the same. You can do this at any time while you have capacity to do so. See our factsheet *Advance Decisions: An introduction* for more information on capacity.

Remember that your Advance Decision will only come into effect if you lack capacity. So, if you are still able to make decisions about medical treatment, your Advance Decision will not apply.

How can we help?

We can send you a free Advance Decision or Advance Statement form along with guidance notes that explain how to complete them. Alternatively, you can complete these documents online for free at www.MyDecisions.org.uk

We can also support you to complete your forms over the phone.

If you have any questions about Advance Decisions, Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Welfare, planning ahead or medical decision-making more generally then please contact our Information Line.

The following factsheets may also be helpful:

- *Advance Decisions (Living Wills) – An introduction*
- *Lasting Powers of Attorney for Health and Welfare – An introduction*
- *Advance Decisions (Living Wills) – Is my form legally binding?*
- *Advance Decisions and LPA for Health and Welfare*

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided in this factsheet is accurate and up-to-date, but information can change over time. Compassion in Dying does not accept any liability arising from its use, and it should not be used as an alternative to legal or medical advice. You can find the latest version of this publication on our website.

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Compassion in Dying supports people to plan ahead to ensure their wishes for treatment and care are respected.

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SUPPORTING YOUR CHOICES

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A list of references is available on request