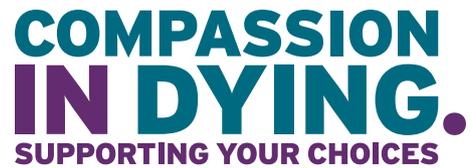


**Information Line:** 0800 999 2434

**Website:** [compassionindying.org.uk](http://compassionindying.org.uk)



## Advance Decisions (Living Wills): Talking to my doctor

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**This factsheet explains why it is important to talk to your doctor before you make an Advance Decision. It also includes tips on how to get the most out of your appointment and what to do next. The information in this factsheet 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.**

### **What is an Advance Decision?**

An Advance Decision allows you to record any medical treatments that you do not want to be given in the future, in case you later become unable to make or communicate decisions for yourself. It can only be used if you cannot make or communicate a decision for yourself. The legal name is an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment, and it used to be called a Living Will.

## How can my doctor help?

It's important that you speak to your doctor about your Advance Decision and any wishes you have for your future treatment. They can:

- explain your treatment options so you can decide what is right for you
- support you to think through any decisions about treatment, making sure you understand how those decisions or choices will affect you
- help you express your wishes in a way that is clear and easily understood by anyone involved in your care – this is important because it means your Advance Decision is more likely to be followed

## Tips for your appointment

- When you call to make your appointment, tell the GP surgery that you want to talk about your Advance Decision. This will give your doctor time to prepare for your appointment. You might also want to book a double appointment so you do not feel rushed.
- Before the appointment, think about any questions you would like to ask or concerns you have, then write these down and take them with you. You could also take your Advance Decision form with you.
- If you do not understand something during the appointment, ask your doctor to explain it. You might also like to take someone with you, such as a family member or friend, to help you remember what was said during the appointment.
- After the appointment, write down or record what you discussed, so you can refer back to it if you need to.

## **What support should I expect from my doctor?**

Your doctor's role is to provide you with factual and understandable information so that you can make choices that are right for you. Any choices you make about your future medical treatment are your own. They should listen to and respect your views about your health and any treatments that you wish to refuse in advance. If your doctor disagrees with your choices, this does not necessarily mean you should change them.

## **Will I need to pay a fee to talk to my doctor?**

It is good practice for doctors to discuss medical treatment and the implications of treatment decisions with their patients but they sometimes charge for non-medical services such as signing insurance certificates and passport applications.

We believe your doctor should not charge you for an appointment to discuss your Advance Decision with you because it is every mentally competent adult's legal right to refuse medical treatment in advance.

If your doctor insists on charging you, please let Compassion in Dying know. We can write to your doctor and explain that an Advance Decision concerns medical treatment and therefore the appointment should not incur a charge.

## **Giving your doctor a copy of your Advance Decision**

It is important that you give your doctor a copy of your Advance Decision. This is because it reflects your wishes for medical treatment and this information should be available to any healthcare professional involved in your care.

If you live in England, you can also ask your doctor to record that you have made an Advance Decision on your Summary Care Record. A Summary Care

Record is an electronic record of important information about your health that is accessible to any health or care professional 24 hours a day. Your GP will only add details about your Advance Decision to your Summary Care Record with your explicit consent.

### **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](http://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 (our contact details are at the end of this factsheet).

If you are having problems talking to your doctor about planning ahead, we can:

- Send your doctor guidance from the General Medical Council, which explains that the use of Advance Decisions is good medical practice.
- Send them a free *Advance Decision Toolkit for Health Professionals*, which provides guidance for healthcare professionals to improve the effectiveness of Advance Decision making and implementation.
- Send you a copy of *Planning Ahead: Making Choices for the End of Life*, a free and comprehensive guide to planning ahead for your future care and treatment.

The following Compassion in Dying factsheet may also be helpful:

- *Advance Decisions (Living Wills) – An introduction*

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