

# Advance Care Planning:

## *What Patients Need to Know*

### **What is advance care planning?**

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Advance care planning (ACP) enables you, your family, and/or caregiver to discuss end-of-life decisions with your physician. This Medicare service involves face-to-face time a physician or other qualified health care professional (such as a nurse practitioner or physician assistant) spends with you, family members, or a caregiver to explain and discuss advanced directives and document end of life wishes.

### **What are advance directives?**

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Advance directives are standard forms, such as a living will and a medical power of attorney.

### **What is a living will?**

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A living will is a legal document which states your health care decisions at the end of life if you are unable to speak for yourself. For example, you may indicate whether or not you want feeding tubes or mechanical respiration, such as a ventilator.

### **What is a medical power of attorney?**

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A medical power of attorney is a legal document that appoints someone to act on your behalf, and make health care decisions in the event that you are unable to speak for yourself.

### **Who needs to know this information?**

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Inform your family and/or caregiver about your end-of-life decisions and your advance directive documents.

### **Why is this important?**

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If you have not stated your wishes in advance directive documents, your family or caregiver may be burdened by having to make tough decisions regarding your care.

### **What is my cost for this service?**

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Medicare will pay for both the coinsurance and deductible if this service is provided during the same day as the Annual Wellness Visit.

### **Is there anything else I should know?**

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Even the healthiest person may experience a crisis, such as a sudden accident and not being able to speak for themselves. If you are faced with a life-threatening illness, it is particularly important to clearly state your wishes in writing. As your health status changes, advance directive documents may need to be reviewed and updated. After the initial documents are complete, a review and/or update of your wishes can occur during your Annual Wellness Visit.

### **Are there other resources that can help me and my family prepare for advance care planning?**

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The American Academy of Family Physicians' consumer website, [familydoctor.org](https://familydoctor.org), features physician-reviewed information for a patient audience. Visit [familydoctor.org/plan](https://familydoctor.org/plan) to learn more about how to help your family plan and questions to ask about end-of-life care.



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