

COMPASSION

IN DYING

SUPPORTING YOUR CHOICES AT THE END OF LIFE

FACTSHEET – Setting your wishes out in writing (Advance Decisions)

This is a quick guide to setting out your wishes for end-of-life care and treatment in writing, in a way that is legally binding. Contact Compassion in Dying for more information.

INFORMATION LINE: **0800 999 2434**

How do I do it?

You can set out your wishes for future treatment in an **Advance Decision**. This is a document that allows doctors to know what treatment you would want if you couldn't tell them yourself – e.g., if you had severe dementia or were in a coma.

It is a good idea to make an Advance Decision because:

1. It helps you to think about what treatment you would want if you couldn't make or communicate your own decisions.
2. It can help you to talk to your loved ones about what you would want, so they know your wishes.
3. Your doctor will keep your Advance Decision with your notes, so other doctors will know how you want to be treated.

Are Advance Decisions legally binding?

The refusal of treatment is legally binding with an Advance Decision. You can refuse any treatment, including life-sustaining treatment (i.e. resuscitation, artificial nutrition and hydration, or breathing machines).

Advance Decisions can also be used to ask for treatment, but this is not legally binding.

However, it is still a good idea to put the treatments you want to ask for in your Advance Decision. Doctors should try to follow your wishes if they can.

How do I make an Advance Decision?

1. Compassion in Dying provides free Advance Decision forms that do not require a solicitor.
2. Think about what you want. **FACTSHEET – Helpful questions for making an Advance Decision** can help get you started.
3. Speak to your loved ones about your wishes. **Quiz – How well do you know my wishes?**
4. Speak to your doctor about your Advance Decision. They will be able to talk to you about which treatments you should include.
5. Fill in your Advance Decision. Then sign and date it, and have your signature witnessed.

See **FACTSHEET – making sure your Advance Decision is legally binding** for more information.

Advance Decisions work well if they apply to the SPECIFIC circumstances you are in. If you would prefer something more flexible, it might be better to make a **Lasting Power of Attorney**.

See **FACTSHEET – Giving someone the power to make decisions for you (Lasting Powers of Attorney)** for more information.

Can I change my mind?

If you change your mind you can change your Advance Decision to reflect this. See **FACTSHEET – Updating your Advance Decision** for more information.

If you have mental capacity, you can override your Advance Decision verbally at any time.

How will people know about my Advance Decision?

It is important that the people close to you and the medical staff who provide your care know that you have an Advance Decision. The following steps can help you to do this:

1. Ask your doctor to keep a copy of your Advance Decision with your notes.
2. Carry the 'Notice of Advance Decision' card (which comes with the Compassion in Dying Advance Decision) or keep a copy of your Advance Decision on your person.
3. Give a copy of your Advance Decision to someone you know could be contacted in an emergency. There is space to put their telephone number on the 'Notice of Advance Decision' card.
4. Give a copy of your Advance Decision to everyone else who is regularly involved in your care. For example, a consultant, health visitor or local hospital.
5. Keep a copy of your Advance Decision yourself and make sure other people know where it is. If you have made photocopies of your Advance Decision, make sure you keep the original.
6. **Optional:** Record your Advance Decision with a medical identification organisation such as **MedicAlert**.

Compassion in Dying does not record Advance Decisions, so there is no need to send a form back to us.

MedicAlert

Tel: 0800 581 420

Web: www.medicalert.org.uk

How can we help?

- We can send you a free **Advance Decision** form and help you to fill it in
- We can give you information about **Lasting Powers of Attorney**
- We can send you a free **Guide to Your Rights at the End of Life**
- Call our free **Information Line** if you have any more questions

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