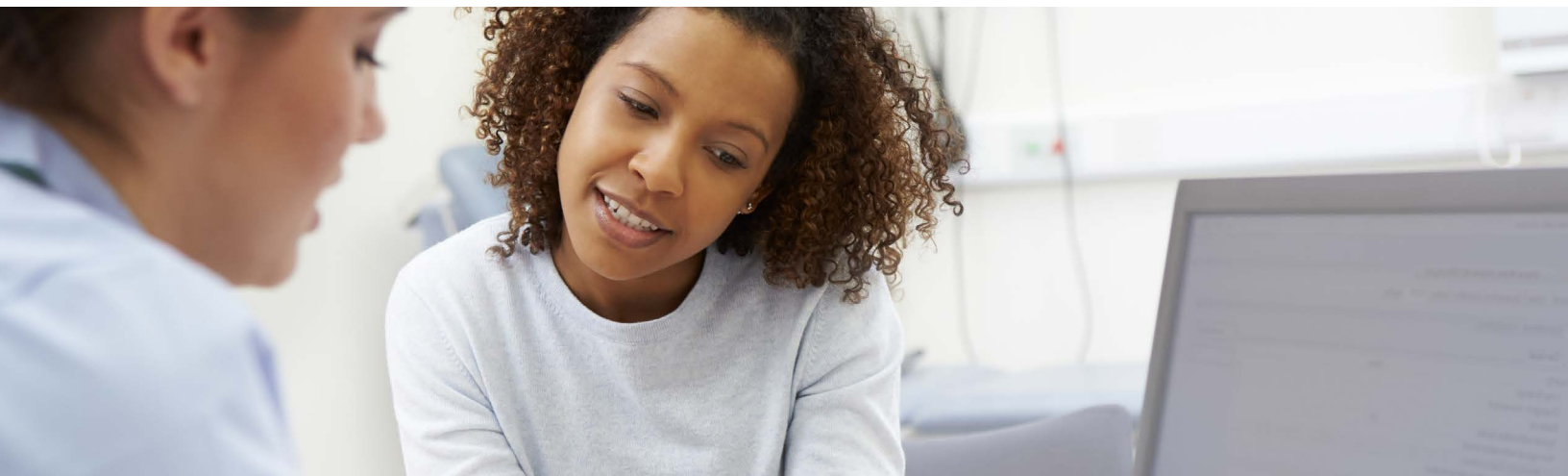


A guide for choosing your healthcare decision maker



Who should be my healthcare decision maker?

It is your choice. A **healthcare decision maker** is someone you trust to be your voice if something happens and you cannot speak for yourself. This person does not have power over non-healthcare issues, such as financial decisions. You do not have to choose a healthcare decision maker, but selecting someone who will honor your wishes may help give you some peace of mind.

- Anyone can be your healthcare decision maker, as long as he or she is a legal adult
- This person can be your spouse, a family member, or even a close friend; he or she does not have to be a doctor
- In some states, this person is also called a *healthcare proxy* or a *healthcare agent*

Here are 3 things to keep in mind:

- 1** A healthcare decision maker is **someone you trust to speak for you** should you become unable to speak for yourself or make your own choices
- 2** Make sure to **share your advance care plan** with your healthcare decision maker so he or she becomes very familiar with your healthcare wishes
- 3** Remember to **let your doctors and loved ones know** about your healthcare decision maker; you should also give a copy of your plan to your doctors and **ask that it be placed in your files**

How should I choose my healthcare decision maker?

When choosing your healthcare decision maker, ask yourself the following questions:

- Whom do I trust to make sure my advance care plan is followed?
- Who understands my goals and preferences about the type of care I want to receive?
- Who is willing to be my healthcare decision maker?
- Who will be comfortable asking questions of busy doctors?
- Can this person reach my healthcare team and family?

It is important to make sure that your healthcare decision maker is willing to take on the responsibility and understands what is being asked of him or her.

What information does my healthcare decision maker need?

Make sure he or she has a copy of your advance care plan and is very familiar with it. You should also go over the plan in person. Discuss your values and beliefs, and answer any questions he or she may have. The more your healthcare decision maker knows about you and your values, the better prepared he or she will be to make decisions that reflect your wishes.

Your healthcare decision maker should also have contact information for the important people in your life.

These may be:

- Your healthcare providers and family members
- Friends, coworkers, and religious leaders
- Anyone else who should be contacted if something happens and you can't speak for yourself

Who should know about my healthcare decision maker?

It is important to let people close to you (or people you trust) know who your healthcare decision maker is. This way, they will know who to contact if you need someone to speak on your behalf. For example, you may want to tell:

- Your spouse or other family members
- Your doctors or healthcare team
- Your lawyer (if you have one)
- Anyone else important to you, such as a close friend or a religious leader

It's okay if you change your mind and want to change your healthcare decision maker. This may involve filling out a new durable power of attorney (DPOA) form for healthcare and telling your family and healthcare team about the change.

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Information should not replace the directions and advice of the healthcare provider.

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