



POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE DISCUSSION TOPICS

The health care agent you name in your Power of Attorney for Health Care document will make decisions for you based upon your directions and your agent's knowledge about you and your wishes. You should discuss your beliefs and wishes with your agent. It is suggested you consider the following questions in your discussion. There are no particular answers. Each person should answer these questions based on his or her own beliefs and then share that information with his or her health care agent. You should also share any other wishes or desires not covered under these topics that you'd like your agent to know.

If your beliefs or attitudes toward any of these issues change, you should inform your agent. It is also wise to inform your agent when there are changes in your health, such as a new diagnosis. If you are diagnosed with a terminal illness, you should discuss the disease and its ramifications with your agent. How well your health care agent performs depends on how well you have prepared that person.

Even if you do not complete a Power of Attorney for Health Care, it is important to discuss these topics with family members and close friends. Without a Power of Attorney for Health Care, a guardian may be appointed to make health care decisions for you. A guardian can follow your wishes, but only if your wishes are known.

Topics:

1. Whether it is a good idea to sign a legal document that specifies what medical treatments you want or do not want when you are dying ("living will").
2. Whether to have any of the following medical treatments. If so, the circumstances under which you want to have the treatment:
 - a. Kidney dialysis (used if your kidneys stop working).
 - b. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation, also known as CPR (used if your heart stops beating or you stop breathing).
 - c. Respirator (used if you are unable to breathe on your own).
 - d. Artificial nutrition (used if you are unable to eat food).
 - e. Artificial hydration (used if you are unable to drink fluids).

3. Whether to donate parts of your body to someone else at the time of your death.
4. Your current health status. If you currently have medical problems, how would you describe them?
5. If you have current medical problems, how do they affect your ability to function?
6. If you have a doctor, do you like him or her? Why?
7. Do you want your doctor to make the final decision about any medical treatments you might need?
8. How important is independence and self-sufficiency in your life?
9. If your physical and mental abilities were decreased, how would that affect your attitude toward independence and self-sufficiency?
10. What are your feelings about independence and control in your life?
11. Do you expect that your friends, family, and others will support your decisions regarding the medical treatment you may need now or in the future?
12. What will be important to you when you are dying (e.g. physical comfort, no pain, family members present, etc.)?
13. Discuss your wishes regarding the place or location where you'd prefer to die.
14. What is your attitude toward death?
15. How do you feel about the use of life-sustaining measures in the face of terminal illness? How about in the face of a permanent coma? Irreversible chronic illness (Alzheimer's Disease, for example)?
16. Do you wish to make any general comments about your attitude toward illness, dying, and death?
17. How do your religious beliefs affect your attitude toward serious or terminal illness?
18. What is your understanding and/or wishes regarding hospice?
19. Do you have a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order on file with your care provider? Do you wear a DNR bracelet?
20. Discuss medication allergies, if any.
21. Share with your agent anything else you feel is important for your agent to know.