

# Starting the End-of-Life Care Conversation with your Healthcare Provider



*Our most essential task is to invite our patients to teach us what it's like to be them, and to listen actively and empathically. Then, we might gather the essential ingredients we need to collaboratively craft a care plan that supports the patient's vision for what makes life worth living.*

– Nate Hinerman, PhD, LMFT, San Francisco, California



## REMEMBER

- » Your concerns and questions are your healthcare provider's priority.
- » Be sure to make it clear you want to talk about end-of-life care. That helps your doctor and the healthcare team to know in advance. Advance care planning consultations are covered under Medicare.
- » Decide whether you want a family member or healthcare advocate to join you when you talk with your provider. If you prefer a private conversation, let the staff know when you make the appointment.
- » If language is a potential barrier, ask a family member, friend or translator to help you ensure that your wishes and your questions are understood.
- » Only you can decide what you want.

## START THE CONVERSATION

- » Talk with your doctor — not office staff, a nurse or a physician's assistant — about your values and priorities for your end-of-life care.
- » Think about what is important to you, how you feel about life-sustaining measures, and how you want to participate in your healthcare decisions.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- » I value quality of life. If I become terminally ill, I would like to have the full range of end-of-life options explained to me including the benefits and burdens of each care option. Can I count on you to do that?
- » I prefer understanding the impact of all treatments on my quality of life. When making treatment recommendations, can I count on you to fully explain their impact on my quality of life?

## TOP TIPS

- » This can be just the first of many talks with your doctor. You don't have to cover everything in one visit.
- » If you don't understand what your doctor is saying, ask them to say it another way.
- » Make sure your priorities and choices are documented in your medical record.
- » Make sure you are heard and understood. Don't settle for just a head-nod from your healthcare provider. Ask your doctor to repeat your wishes to ensure you are being understood.
- » Your preferences may change as time passes. Make sure you talk with your doctor about any changes to your end-of-life care priorities.

## DOCUMENTS TO HAVE

- » **Advance directive**  
An important set of documents that outline end-of-life priorities. It includes a living will ("what I want") and a medical durable power of attorney ("who will speak for me")  
[CandC.org/advance-plan](https://www.candc.org/advance-plan)
- » **Hospital Visitation Form**  
This form gives unmarried couples hospital visitation authorization.  
[CandC.org/hospital-visitation](https://www.candc.org/hospital-visitation)