



## Living Will or Health Care Proxy

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Advance directives are a way of letting your family and doctors know about your health care wishes in case the time comes when you are unable to speak for yourself because of injury or illness. There are two types of advance directives: a living will and a medical power of attorney.

A living will is a document that directs your doctor to withhold or withdraw life-prolonging interventions if you are terminally ill or permanently unconscious. It can tell your doctor to provide only those treatments that will relieve pain and provide comfort. A medical power of attorney allows you to name a person to make health care decisions for you when you are incapable of making decisions yourself. It also allows you to give specific instructions to your representative about the type of care you would want to receive. Experts stress the importance of choosing a representative who knows your values and wishes and who is likely to be available.

There are definite differences between a living will and a medical power of attorney. A living will applies only if you are terminally ill or permanently unconscious, and, unless you write in other specific instructions, it only tells your doctor what you do not want.

The medical power of attorney allows you to appoint someone to make decisions for you if you cannot make them, which in some ways makes it more flexible than the living will. Many people choose to have both a living will and medical power of attorney. If you have both, make sure they are kept together so that your representative will know all of your wishes.

## Each State Is Different

All 50 states have laws that recognize the use of advance directives. For example, your state law may decide at what point a living will goes into effect. It may also limit treatments to which the living will applies.

For more information please contact Bonnie Faulkner, Executive Director Wilson Memorial Hospital Foundation at [bfaulkner@wilsonhospital.com](mailto:bfaulkner@wilsonhospital.com) or (937) 498-5575.

*This information is not intended as financial or legal advice. For financial or legal advice, please consult your financial advisor or attorney.*

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