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## Tagline

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## Advance Care Planning: Taking Charge of End-of-Life Decisions

**F**or patients with a serious illness, the many questions to answer about end-of-life care can feel overwhelming: If you reach a point where you are not able to make a health care decision for yourself, who would you trust to make it for you? What medical procedures would you want to be done? Where would you want to be in your final days?

Advance care planning is a way for patients to make their wishes about end-of-life care clear to family members and medical providers. Both patients and doctors are often reluctant to have these conversations, because it's hard to admit that someone may be facing the end of life. But advance care planning can help reassure both parties that there will be few surprises when the time comes.

When you make an advance care plan, you are outlining the care you would want to receive if you were in a serious medical situation—a coma, for instance—where you would be unable to communicate these preferences. Advance care planning covers the major medical decisions that may come up for

someone who is terminally ill, even the ones that may not seem like an immediate concern.

Starting in 2016, Medicare will reimburse doctors for these conversations, which gives them the time and freedom to have in-depth discussions with patients about end-of-life care. When you start the conversation with your doctor, you can ask him or her to explain all the possible treatments and procedures that may be confusing to you. Ask what those procedures can do, and what they can't. When you've gained the information you need, tell your doctor about your preferences for those treatments. You can also ask your doctor about pain management options, and discuss at what point you would like to focus on comfort over treatment.

It is important to record your wishes in writing, and to share them with loved ones as well. Appoint a healthcare proxy—a trusted friend or family member—who will be able to speak on your behalf if you are in a position that doesn't allow you to speak for yourself. Once the plans are made, medical experts encourage people to review and update their advance care plans annually to make sure the plans reflect their current preferences.

Contact us for additional information about advance care planning, or visit the following websites for helpful advice on how to begin your plans:

- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization  
<http://www.nhpco.org/advance-care-planning>
- ACP Decisions  
<https://www.acpdecisions.org/patients/>
- National Institute on Aging  
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/advance-care-planning>



## Hospice Information for Patients and Families

### Online Campaign Shows Hospice Is about Living

When people think about hospice, they may assume that it exists solely to help people die. This misunderstanding prevents patients and their families from seeing one of the main benefits of hospice: its goal is to help patients live better.

“Moments of Life: Made Possible by Hospice” is a campaign recently launched by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) to highlight the important life moments that patients are able to participate in because of hospice. The campaign features stories about patients around the country in the form of videos, photos, texts, or other media.

“In this campaign, we are looking for real stories that show patients’ abilities to ‘do more’ as a result of their experience on hospice,” says Anita Brikman, senior vice president of communications for NHPCO. “No matter what format is used, these stories should show America that even when you’re dying, there is still a lot of living to do.”

Because pain and side effects of difficult curative treatments can prevent many patients from doing things they love, the comfort care of hospice—where pain and symptoms are managed without harsh medical interventions—can allow patients to do things they enjoy. Instead of “giving up,” as hospice care is often described, hospice can help increase a patient’s quality of life so that his or her final days, weeks, and months are filled with moments of joy.

Hospice patients often find that being able to remain at home and surrounded by loved ones is all the hope they need.

“For many who have not seen hospice in action, it has become a common misconception that hospice patients are merely lying in bed, waiting for their end to come,” states the NHPCO. “For families who have experienced hospice, they see the focus is not on dying—it is about living as fully as possible.”

Some of the stories included on the “Moments of Life” website include a World War II veteran taking an Honor Flight hours before his passing, a Hawaiian man whose hospice threw him a final luau, and a breast cancer patient who was able to see her

son get married when the hospice offered to host the wedding in her room. Nearly all the posted stories involve tender moments spent with family and close friends, outside of hospitals and without fear.

“[This campaign] is working with the entire hospice community to show that hospice helps patients obtain the end-of-life care they prefer at home, free of pain, surrounded by loved ones,” notes J. Donald Schumacher, NHPCO president and CEO.

Hospice care is not about giving up or giving in; it is about giving patients the best moments possible.

For more information about how hospice care can help you or your loved one have a better quality of life, contact us or visit **moments.nhpc.org**.

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**Hospice Name**

**Street**

**City, State, ZIP**

**Phone**

**www.website.com**