

So you have an Advance Directive, awesome! Now what???

Congratulations, you have taken a very important step toward caring for yourself and protecting your loved ones! In order to ensure the quality of life that is important to you is honored in accordance with your advance directive, the following are some important steps that you need to take:

- Provide a copy of your advance directive to the person you appoint as your agent and confirm that he or she understands your wishes; is prepared to follow your wishes at the critical time; and will be your advocate to ensure your wishes are carried out.
- Provide a copy of your advance directive to the person/s you appoint as an alternate designated agent and confirm that they understand your wishes; that they are prepared to follow your wishes at the critical time; and that they will be your advocate to ensure your wishes are carried out.
- Meet with your primary care physician, along with your designated agent, and provide him/her with a copy of your advance directive and confirm that your physician will fully comply with your wishes. If not, you need to find a new primary care physician who will do so.
- Meet with your specialists and discuss your wishes and provide them with a copy of your advance directive.
- Discuss your wishes with the key people in your life, including your family and friends, so that at the critical time they know your wishes and there are no surprises that will cause them to question the validity of your advance directive.
- Keep a copy of your advance directive in your nightstand or sock drawer or on your refrigerator, so that it is easy for others to find in the event of an emergency.
- Place a large colored paper on your refrigerator door that says where your advance directive is kept so it can be easily located.

- Keep a list of the names and telephone numbers of the people (physicians, agents, family members and friends) with whom you have discussed your advance directive and your wishes. Keep the contact list alongside the copy of your advance directive.
- Take your advance directive with you when you go to the hospital, even for outpatient procedures. You will likely be asked to provide or complete an advance directive and it's best to have time to think about it and take the one you've already completed.
- Take a copy of your advance directive with you when you travel.
- Provide a copy of your advance directive to your personal attorney, if you have one.
- Review your advance directive on an annual basis to make sure that it is up to date and remains an accurate reflection of your wishes and confirm with your agents that they are still on board to be your advocate.
- Invite the key people in your life to share their end-of-life wishes with you and encourage and support them in memorializing their wishes into an advance directive so that they do not put their loved ones through the duress of having to guess and make critical medical care decisions when they are under stress or in emotional turmoil.
- The key people in your life can obtain a *state specific* copy of the advance directive form for their state from the Compassion & Choices' website http://www.compassionandchoices.org/ad_page.
- Like the convenience of having your advance directive with you at all times? Join Compassion & Choices as a Benefactor (\$100) and receive a wallet-sized CD of your advance directive. You can do this online at Compassion & Choices' website <http://www.compassionandchoices.org/give/renew>.

Once your advance directive is done, *relax!* Enjoy life. That's why you've gone to the trouble of creating and maintaining this important document.