

PLAN

WELL

Guide

5 Tips for Choosing a Representative for Future Healthcare and Personal Care Decision Making



CHOOSING THE RIGHT REPRESENTATIVE

#1

Choose someone who will make decisions that align with your values and preferences.

Your (or province-specific equivalent e.g. attorney for personal care in Ontario, agent in Alberta) will need to make decisions on your behalf regarding the healthcare treatments you receive. Their own wishes may be different from yours and making decisions that conflict with their own preferences could cause emotional stress. Choose someone who will still make decisions that align with your needs despite the possibility of having different preferences. For example, one of the hardest decisions to make is to 'let go' of a loved one and focus on comfort measures only when it is what the person would have wanted. Yet, the surviving family wants their loved one (the patient) to carry on fighting for survival. If this is your situation, your decision maker will need to hear your

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voice and understand your reasons behind your preferences in order to make these difficult decisions.

Make sure the person you choose understands your values and preferences very well and is comfortable taking on this role. Talk to them before naming them as your representative and make sure they are informed of your Advance Serious Illness plan.

Q1

On a scale of 1-7 circle the number to best describe how important you think the following is to you:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I want medical treatments that focus on prolonging my life			Equally important	I want medical treatments that focus on maintaining the quality of my remaining life		

Q2

On a scale of 1-7 circle the number to best describe how important you think the following is to you:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I want doctors to do everything possible, including the use of machines, to keep me alive for as long as possible			Equally important	I want a natural death without being attached to machines		

#2

Choose someone who can make difficult decisions in stressful situations.

Representatives make decisions about treatments, procedures, even life supports. Because you are seriously ill, they are deciding about using or not using life supports or other life-sustaining procedures. These are life and death decisions and are extremely stressful for representatives to make!

Also, in the moment when your representative makes decisions with the medical team, they will be presented with a lot of medical information about your disease and the possible treatment options. You will want to pick someone who can process information and make good decisions under stressful conditions. They will also need to have a deep understanding of your values and preferences in order to make decisions that align with them no matter the situation.



#3

Choose someone who will be a strong advocate for you and your values and preferences.

Choose someone who will be comfortable speaking up on your behalf to family members, doctors, or other members of your medical team. They will need to be able to ask questions to understand the situation, and advocate on your behalf to get you care that aligns with your wishes,

even if your decisions are opposed by other family members or the medical team. It is important to note that your values and preferences are not the deciding factor of your care, but rather they inform the shared decision that is made by the doctors, your medical team, your family, and your representative. Knowing your values and preferences helps your representative and doctors in making the best decision for you with the information they have about your condition.



#4

Best to choose just one person (but make sure you have a backup)

In some provinces, you can name more than one person as your representative. However, it is recommended that you choose just one. It is possible that your decision makers could disagree with each other about your care and could encounter conflict. Another potential problem can occur if only one of the named representative is available and the other is not.

This may require extra legal steps to move forward with just the one who is available. To avoid this, choose one representative and designate an alternate representative in case your first choice is not available and/or unreachable.

“Take the time to choose a person who you can truly trust to honour your values and preferences.”



#5

Don't default to a close family member, choose someone who really understands and will be able to bear the emotional burden.

Don't make this decision lightly. Sometimes a close family member will struggle to cope with the stress of the situation or let their own values get in the way of making decisions for you.

Take the time to choose a person who you can truly trust to honour your values and preferences, who understands them, and who will advocate on your behalf.

If you don't want to choose a family member, that is perfectly acceptable. There are many people in trusting relationships who could be your decision maker including neighbours, members of a faith community, and friends.

For more information, videos and resources to help you make your plan,
please visit: planwellguide.com