

Living Will



It is important for you to be able to decide what health care you wish to receive. Due to an accident or illness, it could happen that you would no longer be able to say what you want.

By planning now, you ensure that your wishes will be known and honoured in the future. As long as you are able to understand your doctor and communicate with him, you will be asked to decide for yourself, but if this communication is no longer possible, your doctor, family, and loved ones will be guided by your living will.

The questions you need to think about are:

- Who will represent you to make decisions on your behalf if you are no longer able to do so?
- Which treatments do you wish to receive and not receive?
- Do you wish to receive treatments that prolong life?

Planning your end-of-life care means:

- Talking about this with your family, loved ones, and care team;
- Helping your family and loved ones so they don't have to make decisions for you without knowing your wishes;
- Preventing conflicts that could arise if your family members and loved ones do not agree on the treatments that you must or must not receive.

The most difficult decisions involve treatments that prolong life, such as:

- Resuscitation;
- Respirator use;
- IV hydration;
- Tube feeding.

What is a living will?

A living will is a document that communicates your wishes in advance. It serves to:

- Specify the care that you wish to receive;
- Appoint your proxy (representative);
- Guide your doctor, care team, family, and loved ones in making decisions.

What is a proxy?

Your proxy is the person you appoint to make decisions on your behalf, based on your wishes, when you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself.

Name someone you trust who will make sure your wishes are followed and who accepts this responsibility.

If you have a power of attorney for personal care, you must appoint the same person.

Will your living will be honoured?

Discuss your living will with your family and loved ones. This will help them honour your wishes. Prevent conflicts that could arise if a family member opposes your living will.

Your doctor and care team will do everything in their power to ensure that your wishes are honoured.

Note that a living will is not a legally binding document in New Brunswick. If you want a legal document, please speak to a lawyer about drawing up a power of attorney for personal care.

Who do you have to talk to about your living will?

Talk to the following people about your living will:

- Your doctor;
- Your nurse practitioner;
- Your proxy;
- Your family (spouse, children) and loved ones.

What do you have to do?

1. Ask your doctor or nurse or a member of your care team for a living will form or visit the Vitalité Health Network website at www.vitalitenb.ca to download a copy.
2. Sign the living will form.
3. Have it signed by your proxy and a witness.
4. Give copies to:
 - Your proxy;
 - Your doctor;
 - Your family;
 - The hospital's Health Records Department for filing in your health record.
5. Think about and revise your living will at least once a year. If you change it, replace all outdated copies with the new version.
6. Your living will remains valid until it is revised.

