

Next Steps: Advance Care Planning for Chronic Illness

Most people living with a chronic illness experience changes over time. You may have more problems, symptoms, or changes in your daily activities. Clinic visits and hospital stays may be more frequent.

When these changes begin, we have found it helpful to schedule a time to talk and learn about what matters most to you. It is never too early to prepare yourself and loved ones for decisions that may be needed in the future.

A Next Steps advance care planning conversation will help us tailor your treatment plan to fit your goals and values – to what matters most.

What is a Next Steps conversation?

You can meet with a Next Steps facilitator, your healthcare agent and others close to you before a health crisis occurs. The facilitator will guide you in thinking and talking about what is important to you. Topics like these will be discussed:

- How your illness has changed
- What problems you may have in the future
- What “living well” means to you
- Your hopes and goals for your current plan of care
- Services or referrals needed to help you live as well as possible
- Your idea of which setbacks are acceptable to you and which ones are not
- Your choices for medical problems that may occur

A Next Steps conversation will prepare your healthcare agent to make decisions if and when you cannot communicate and make your own decisions. The result can be a written plan to add to your advance directive. (If you do not have an advance directive, we can help you create one.)

What if I already have an advance directive?

During the Next Steps conversation we will:

- Review your advance directive or power of attorney for healthcare (POAHC).
- Update your advance directive or POAHC to match your current decisions.
- Create an additional written plan that explains your medical decisions in more detail.
- Communicate all changes to your healthcare provider for more discussion if needed.

How can I schedule an appointment?

Tell any member of your healthcare team you would like a Next Steps appointment. A facilitator will call to schedule a time for you, your healthcare agent and others you may wish to attend. A typical meeting lasts about 90 minutes.

For more information

To learn more about Next Steps, call:

Advance Care Planning

8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays

(608) 775-6000 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 56000

(608) 775-1347 or (800) 362-9567, ext. 51347

All rights reserved - Gundersen Health System Patient Education

This information is meant to inform and educate our patients. It supports the care you receive from your health care team. It does not replace medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment. Talk to your doctor or health care team before starting any new treatment.

Last revised 06/22/2016 PE 002164