

# Be prepared in the time of COVID-19



During COVID-19, our health can change suddenly and without any warning.

If you became seriously ill from COVID-19, would your loved ones, caregivers and healthcare providers know how you would want to be cared for? Who would speak for you if you were too ill to speak for yourself?

**It is important to start planning for your care now, before there is urgent need. Follow these steps:**



## THINK about what matters most to you

- What makes each day worthwhile for you?
- What gives your life meaning, joy and purpose?
- What cultural or spiritual beliefs are important to you?



## THINK about **your risk** of becoming seriously ill with COVID-19

- Do you have any health conditions like diabetes, heart, lung, or kidney problems?
- Are you over the age of 65?
- Do you have an autoimmune disease or a weakened immune system from a medical condition or treatment such as chemotherapy?

*If you answer yes to any of these questions, you are at higher risk for developing severe illness from COVID-19. Discuss your health care wishes with your doctor/healthcare team.*



## THINK about what **abilities** you can't imagine living without

Consider abilities such as getting dressed, toileting, feeding, walking, hearing, vision, talking with family and friends, driving and managing your finances.

What abilities are essential for **your** quality of life?

*After treatment in an intensive care unit (ICU), people may experience problems with some of these abilities.*

Disclaimer: This information does not replace professional medical advice from doctors or nurse practitioners. It is strongly recommended that people speak to their healthcare providers after thinking and talking about the issues in this documents.



**THINK** about what **life-support treatments** you would accept or refuse

Some of these life-support treatments have been needed by people critically ill with COVID-19:

- Admission to hospital intensive care unit (ICU)
- A breathing tube connected to a ventilator
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

**Read** the companion resource **‘What if I Get Seriously Ill with COVID-19? Life-support Treatments and Complications’** for more information about these life-support treatments.

*Whatever options you choose, your healthcare team will do their best to control your symptoms and make you comfortable.*



**THINK** about **where** you would want to be cared for if you became seriously ill

- Whatever the location (your home, a hospital, a facility such as long term care, hospice), you will always receive care and treatments to control your pain, manage your breathing and keep you comfortable.

*It is important to ask about current visitation restrictions in the location you are considering as this may impact your decision.*



**CHOOSE** the best **person to speak on your behalf** if you became unable

**Choose** someone who:

- You trust to make decisions that honour your wishes and instructions
- Is calm in a crisis and able to handle conflict

*You can complete a Personal Directive to legally name them to speak on your behalf (this person is called your Agent). More information on this below.*



**TALK** to your Agent, loved ones, and healthcare providers about your care wishes

**Make** a time to talk with your Agent and loved ones. You can start the conversation by saying:

*“I’m not sick right now, but I want to share with you what matters most to me and how I would want to be cared for if I get very sick from COVID-19.”*

**Book** a time with your doctor or nurse practitioner to talk about your priorities and wishes for care if you get very sick from COVID-19.

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## WRITE DOWN or RECORD your health care wishes and goals

How you can let others know about your wishes:

- **Complete a *Personal Directive*** to legally name someone as your Agent(s) and write down any wishes that are important to you. You do not need a lawyer or notary to complete it. If you are interested in a Personal Directive and to find a template you can use please visit [www.alberta.ca/personal-directive.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/personal-directive.aspx).
- **Talk with your doctor or nurse practitioner** if there are specific treatments you would not want. They need to know and can write a medical order called a **Goals of Care Designation**. They can give you the completed form so that your wishes will be known in an emergency.

Visit [www.conversationsmatter.ca](http://www.conversationsmatter.ca) for more information (click on 'Patients and Families' and then 'Resources').



## KEEP all these documents together in a place that is easy to find

First responders know to check **on or near the fridge** for healthcare planning documents.

You may have been given a **Green Sleeve** by your healthcare provider in order to keep all the documents together. Keep it on or near the fridge.



## TELL your Agent and loved ones **where to find** these documents (consider **giving copies**)

## BRING these documents with you if you **go to the hospital or to any medical appointments**



## REVISIT what you want for your care whenever there is a change in your health or living situation

Your healthcare wishes and values may change over time or if you become ill. Have ongoing conversations with your loved ones and healthcare team.

### For more information visit:

[www.conversationsmatter.ca](http://www.conversationsmatter.ca) and <http://www.alberta.ca/personal-directive.aspx>

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