



My Wishes, My Care: Thinking it Through

A guide to help you explore and
share your future healthcare wishes



Ensure your wishes are known.

My Wishes, My Care: Thinking it Through helps you to reflect on your values, beliefs and wishes for health and personal care and to share this information with family* and healthcare providers before a medical crisis happens. It may not be easy to think about, but doing so now can help you, your family and your healthcare providers ensure you get the care you want.

This booklet will help you think through what is important to you, what concerns you have, and who you would want to make decisions for you if a time comes when you can't make decisions for yourself.





How to use this booklet

This booklet will help you to organize your thoughts and feelings about what is important to you. You can go through this booklet by yourself or complete it with a trusted family member(s) or friend(s). You can also use it as a guide when talking with your healthcare providers about your wishes for care.

Go at your own pace. Take your time reading through the booklet. You don't have to read it all at once. You may find it helpful to write your answers down.

This is not a legal document and cannot be used to provide consent for treatments. It is not a Will and has nothing to do with the distribution of your property or finances. It is a guide to help you explore your thoughts, and to start having conversations about your health and personal care.

* In this booklet, “family” can be anyone you see as your close circle of support. This could include friends, family members, and trusted advisors.

How can this booklet help you and your family?

Preparing for future health care

When people get difficult health news, they often say that they only heard a small part of what the doctor or nurse said. The rest is just noise. There is so much information, so many decisions, and so much to think about. Even simple decisions can be very hard. If you have already completed this booklet, it can make a difficult time for you and your family a bit easier. Thinking about this now can help when you need to have other discussions about care and treatment.

If you can't speak for yourself

If you get sick or if you are involved in an accident and cannot speak for yourself, talking with others ahead of time can:

- Let family and healthcare providers know what is important to you.
- Give you peace of mind that your wishes are known.
- Help family avoid conflict and stress if they need to make decisions about your care.
- Give you a say in who you do – and don't – want to provide care to you.
- Give you a say in where you want to receive care.
- Help to develop trust with healthcare providers.

If I became seriously ill, I'd want my family to know that it's all going to be ok. Don't panic – choose comfort and choose to be together by my side. Hold hands, sing, laugh, love, be brave and continue carrying on.



Getting started: Thinking about what is important to you

First, think about the following: What is important to me? How do I want to live my life? These answers will help you to prepare to talk with family and healthcare providers. Family is anyone you see as your close circle of support. This could include friends, family members and trusted advisors.

Some things to think about:

Who are the important people in your life?

(This could include family, friends, spiritual or religious guides, mentors, support people.)

What makes your life meaningful?

(For example: spending time with your family; being able to work; practising your spiritual beliefs; being outside; pursuing artistic or creative activities, e.g. painting, woodworking, sewing or beading; outdoor activities, such as hiking; contributing to your community.)

Do you have spiritual, cultural or religious beliefs or practices that are important to you? What are they?

Are there things you learned about life that you would want to share with others?



What are you most afraid of?

Thinking about your care

Next, think about your wishes for your health and personal care and what you value the most. How would you like your physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs met?

Some things to think about:

If you were to get very sick, what would matter the most to you?

(For example: being able to spend time with your children or having your grandchildren near you; being in the comfort of your own home; having people around you who speak your language; being pain free; receiving excellent medical care; keeping your dignity.)



“ I want to be looked after and be able to make my decisions and have everything prepared... I don't want to burden my children. I want them to just be able to come and relax with me and spend time. I don't want to go on machines or anything. When it is my time to go, I just want to go... I want to go peacefully. ”

If you were to get very sick, what would you be the most concerned about?

(For example: making sure that your children are taken care of; ensuring your finances are in order; not being able to work; needing to leave your home or community to receive care.)

My cultural and spiritual practices are important to me. I would want my culture’s traditional medicines and ceremonies to be a part of my care. I would also want my healthcare providers to support that.



1

2

3

4

Want to receive medical treatments for as long as possible, no matter how uncomfortable the treatments are

Choose to stop medical treatments if they affect my ability to enjoy my life

1

2

3

4

Not want traditional, alternative or complementary healing and medicine as part of my care

Want traditional, alternative or complementary healing and medicine as part of my care

1

2

3

4

Want to spend my last days in the hospital

Want to spend my last days at home or in the community



1

2

3

4

Want to live as long as possible even if it means leaving my home or community

Want to stay in my community even if it may shorten my life

1

2

3

4

Want to be left alone

Want family to be around me

1

2

3

4

Want to be kept alive, even with machines

Not want to be kept alive with machines if I won't recover

1

2

3

4

Not want family to know anything about my health

Want family to know everything about my health

*These scales were adapted from The Conversation Project, developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, theconversationproject.org

Here are some additional questions that you may want to think about:

What kind of medical treatments would you want or not want if you are unlikely to survive or to live independently after treatment?

(For example: CPR or other resuscitation if your heart stops; breathing machine; feeding tubes.)

Why would you want or not want these treatments?

If you have any questions about your health condition(s) and treatment options, you may want to speak to your healthcare provider.

If you have to leave your home or community for care, who would you like to accompany you? Do you have any special items you would like to take with you for comfort or to remind you of home and family?

(For example: photos; articles of clothing; blankets.)



If you needed help with your personal care, who would you be most comfortable with helping you? Who would you not want helping you?

(Personal care includes bathing, brushing your teeth, grooming, getting dressed, going to the toilet.)

Do any of your family members disagree with your wishes? Who, and what wishes?

Are there things that you still need to talk to your family about?

(For example: getting your finances together; deciding who is going to take care of your children/grandchildren; preparing for ceremonies or memorials.)

Sharing your wishes

Share your answers from this booklet with the people in your life (partner/spouse, child/children, parents, siblings, friend, healthcare provider, Elder, spiritual guide, religious leader, or others) to ensure that everyone is aware of your wishes. If there are things that you and your family disagree on, it is helpful to know this and talk about it before a crisis happens.

Here are some ways to start the conversation:

“I’ve just filled out this booklet called ‘My Wishes, My Care.’ It’s about planning for future health and personal care, and I want to share it with you.”

“My health is good right now, but I want to talk to you about what I’d want if I got sick.”

“I was talking with my healthcare provider and they encouraged me to think about my future and make a plan in case I got sick. Can you help me?”

“One of my biggest fears is that if I got sick, my children/family would argue with each other about what is best for me. I want to share with you what I want so that everyone understands.”

“I was thinking about what happened to _____ when they got sick, and it made me realize that I would never want those things to happen to me.”

Making sure your wishes are known

Now that you have shared your wishes with the people in your life, you may want to choose one or two people you feel would honour your wishes and be able to make future health and personal care decisions on your behalf. This person(s) would speak for you and may be asked to give consent for treatments if you are not able to speak for yourself.

In British Columbia, the person(s) who speaks for you is called a substitute decision maker. They are either your legally appointed representative, or someone chosen from the temporary substitute decision maker list in the order defined by law. To be a substitute decision maker, they must be 19 years or older, capable, in contact with you in the last year, and have no dispute with you.

For more information about substitute decision makers, visit www.bc-cpc.ca/sdm

When choosing who will speak for you, think about the following:

- Do you trust this person(s) to make decisions for you?
- Do you think this person would be willing to speak for you if you cannot speak for yourself?
- Does this person meet the legal requirements to speak for you?
- Can this person(s) talk clearly with your healthcare team?
- Can this person(s) make difficult decisions in stressful times?
- Have you included all the people who may need to speak for you in your conversations?



I would want my eldest son to speak for me if I can't speak for myself because he knows what matters most to me when it comes to my care. It's important to me that the rest of my family supports him in the decisions he makes.

Remember: Once you have selected the person(s) who will speak for you, let them know if your wishes, values, and beliefs change. Continue to talk with other family members and your healthcare providers to ensure everyone understands your wishes. They will then be better able to support the person speaking for you when decisions about your care need to be made.

You can always change your mind about your wishes. You can also decide to choose a different substitute decision maker at any time. It is important to talk about any changes with your substitute decision maker(s), family members and friends, your healthcare provider(s), and other people who are important to you.

After completing this workbook, you may wish to document your values, beliefs and wishes in an advance care plan. For more information on how to do this, visit www.bc-cpc.ca/acp

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on advanced illness, advance care planning, palliative care, end-of-life care and grief, please visit:

BC Centre for Palliative Care www.bc-cpc.ca/acp

Canadian Virtual Hospice www.virtualhospice.ca

Living My Culture www.livingmyculture.ca

*“ One of the teachings of one of my Elders was
‘When I go, if you need me, I’m in the wind.’
When I thought about that, what I find really
interesting is that everything that has ever lived
on this Earth has left a breath in the wind.
No wonder we can see spirits and hear them.”*



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**BC Centre for
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