



# My Wishes Alberta: Planning for My Care

A workbook to help you explore and  
share your health care wishes



Covenant Health  
Palliative Institute



CANADIAN  
Virtual Hospice

# Explore and share your wishes for care.

*My Wishes Alberta: Planning for My Care* was created to help you reflect on your values and preferences for health and personal care and share this information with the people who matter most to you, as well as with your health care providers. It guides you to think through what is important to you, what concerns you have, and who you want to make decisions for you if you become too sick or injured to choose for yourself. This topic may not be easy to think about, but doing so can prepare you and others to make important decisions about your care now and in the future.

## How to use this workbook

- Work through it by yourself or with someone you trust.
- Take time to think about your answers.
- Complete the questions that matter to you.
- Use this workbook to start conversations about your health and personal care.



# How can this workbook help?

## Preparing for health care decisions

When people get difficult or unexpected health news, they often say that they only heard a small part of what the health care provider said. There is so much information, so many decisions, and so much to think about. Even simple decisions can be hard. Thinking about what matters to you in advance can make a difficult time a bit easier for you and the people close to you.

## If you can't speak for yourself

If you get sick or injured and cannot speak for yourself, thinking and talking about your wishes ahead of time:

- Lets the people who matter most know what is important to you.
- Gives you peace of mind that your wishes are known.
- Reduces conflict and stress when decisions about your care must be made.
- Gives you a say in your care.
- Helps your health care providers give you the best possible care.

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

# What matters most to you?

First, think about the following: What is important to you? What do you value most in your life? These answers will help you prepare to talk with the people that are close to you and with your health care providers.

## Who are the most important people in your life?

(For example: family members, friends, spiritual or religious guides, mentors, support people)

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## What brings you joy and makes your life meaningful?

(For example: spending time with family or friends, spiritual or religious practices, work, hobbies, contributing to your community, being outside, physical activities)

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**Do you have spiritual, cultural, or religious beliefs that are important to you?**

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**What have you learned in your life that you want to share with others?**

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# Thinking about your wishes for care

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

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

(For example: being able to spend time with your family and friends, being in your own home, having people around you who speak your language, being pain-free, being treated with dignity)

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## **If you were to get very sick, what would you be most worried about?**

(For example: being in pain, being alone, needing to leave your home or community to receive care, that the people you care for are looked after, finances)

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**What would you want your care providers to know about you as a person so that they could give you the best possible care?**

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*“I follow a traditional lifestyle and that would be part of my expectations in my care – that it would be incorporated into Western medical interventions. That might mean plant medicines, teas, or even ceremonies in a medical context. I would want my health care providers to support this.”*

## Think about the following questions.

There are no right or wrong answers. Select the answer that best matches your wishes. You can also add your thoughts on the lines below each question.

### If you were to get very sick...

**How much information would you like about your illness and treatment?**

All       Some       None

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**How much say would you like to have about your treatment and care?**

All       Some       None

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**Would you like your health care provider to tell you their estimate of how long you have to live?**

Yes       No       Maybe

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**Would you want to receive medical treatments to help you live as long as possible, even if they made you sick, uncomfortable, or unable to live the way you want?**

Yes       No       Maybe

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**Would you want traditional, alternative, or complementary medicine as part of your care?**

Yes       No       Maybe

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**Would you want to live as long as possible, even if it meant leaving your community?**

Yes       No       Maybe

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**Would you want the people close to you to follow your wishes exactly, even if they did not agree with them?**

Yes       No       Maybe

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**Would you want the people close to you to know everything about your health?**

Yes       No       Maybe

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**Where would you prefer to spend your last days?**

(For example: at home, in a hospice, in a hospital, in a nursing home)

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**If you had to leave your home or community for care, who would you like to be with you? What personal things would you like to take with you?**

(For example: photos, clothing, comfort supplies, spiritual, religious, or cultural items)

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**If you needed help with your personal care** (e.g., bathing, brushing your teeth, grooming, getting dressed, going to the toilet), **who would you be most comfortable with helping you?**  
**Who would you not want to help you?**

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**Do any of the important people in your life disagree with your wishes?**

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**Are there things you still need to talk about with the people close to you?**

(For example: finances, who will take care of your dependants or pets, ceremonies or funeral plans, unfinished personal matters)

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# Talking about your wishes

Now that you have thought about what matters to you, it is important to share your thoughts with the people who matter most (parents, children, partner/spouse, siblings, friends, Elders, religious leaders, or others) so that everyone is aware of your wishes. If there are things that you and those close to you disagree on, it is helpful to know this and talk about it.

You may also use this workbook as a guide to help you talk with your doctor, nurse, or other health care providers about your wishes for care. If you have an existing health condition, you may also want to ask any questions you have about your health, treatment options, and what to expect in the future.

## Here are some ways to start the conversation:

"I've just filled out this workbook called *My Wishes Alberta*. It's about planning for future health 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 my health were to change."

"I was talking with my health care provider, and they encouraged me to think about making a plan in case I develop an illness in the future. Can you help me?"

"One of my biggest fears is that if I got sick, the people close to me 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 honoured

Now that you have shared your wishes with the important 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 life decisions on your behalf if you became too sick or injured to speak for yourself. In Alberta, this person is called an **agent** and is appointed by completing a legal document called a **personal directive**. The person(s) you name as your agent must be at least 18 years old and have the mental capacity to make decisions on your behalf.

For more information, visit <https://www.alberta.ca/personal-directive.aspx>

## When choosing an agent, think about the following:

- Do you trust this person to make decisions for you?
- Can this person communicate clearly with your health care team?
- Can this person make difficult decisions in stressful times?



*I would want my eldest son to speak for me if I couldn'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.*

Once you have selected the person(s) that you would like to speak for you, ask if they are willing to be your agent and share your wishes with them. If you name more than one agent, make sure you speak to each person about your wishes. Talk with the other important people in your life, as well as your health care providers, to ensure everyone understands what's important to you. This will help them better support the person(s) speaking for you when decisions about your care need to be made.

You can always change your mind about your preferences for care as things change. You can also choose a different agent(s) at any time. It is important to talk about any changes with the people close to you.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

**Compassionate Alberta:** <https://compassionatealberta.ca/>

**Advance Care Planning: Preparing for Your Future Healthcare**  
<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/HealthTopics/Advance-Care-Planning>

**Canadian Virtual Hospice** [www.virtualhospice.ca](http://www.virtualhospice.ca)

**Living My Culture** [www.livingmyculture.ca](http://www.livingmyculture.ca)



**Did you find this workbook helpful?  
Please share your feedback by taking  
our survey.**

<https://redcap.link/mywishes>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Gerry Oleman** MB

**Roberta Price** BC

**Ruth Mercredi** NT

**Stella Johnson** BC

**Ella Paul** NS

**Jeroline Smith** MB

**Holly Prince, Lead author**, Lakehead University

## Improving End-of-Life Care in First Nations Communities

**Research Team**, Lakehead University (2015). Developing Palliative Care Programs in First Nations Communities: A Workbook, Version 1, [eolfn.lakeheadu.ca](http://eolfn.lakeheadu.ca)

## Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association,

[advancecareplanning.ca](http://advancecareplanning.ca)

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*This workbook was adapted from the Coming Full Circle booklet originally prepared by the Canadian Virtual Hospice and an Elders' and Knowledge Carriers' Circle. Canadian Virtual Hospice collaborated with the Covenant Health Palliative Institute to adapt the original booklet for Albertans. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the Canadian Virtual Hospice or the Elders' and Knowledge Carriers' Circle.*

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