

# Advance Health Care Directive/ *Why It Should Be Important to You*

An "Advance Health Care Directive" lets your physician, family and friends know your health care preferences, including the types of special treatment you want or don't want at the end of life, your desire for diagnostic testing, surgical procedures, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and organ donation.

By considering your options early, you can ensure the quality of life that is important to you and avoid having your family "guess" your wishes or having to make critical medical care decisions for you under stress or in emotional turmoil.

If you are unsure of your options or have questions, we suggest that you talk with your physician and other trusted advisors. The following steps are guidelines that you may follow to formulate an Advance Directive:

## Gather Information for Decision Making

Your physician is a good place to start for understanding your options on health care treatment at the end of life. In addition, many organizations have information that may be useful.

## Discuss Your end-of-Life Decisions With Key People

Talk about your decisions with your family, physician and others who are close to you. Some questions to consider for discussion:

- What is important to you?
- Are there specific medical treatments you especially want or do not want?
- Do you want to be in a nursing home, hospital or at home?
- What are the options in Palliative Care/Pain Management and Hospice Care?



## Prepare Your Advance Care Directive Form

You have a legal right to express your health care wishes and to have them considered in situations when you are unable to make these decisions yourself.

California consolidated various earlier forms used to indicate health care preferences into one Advance Care Directive. All valid health care directives executed before July 1, 2000 can remain in effect under California Probate Code section 4701. While state law requires certain provisions to appear in your health care directive, there is no single form in use to document your wishes.

## Designate a Person to Carry Out Your Wishes

Select who should handle your health care choices and discuss the matter with them. You could name a spouse, relative or other person.

## Inform Key People of Your Preferences

Notify your doctor, family and close friends about your end-of-life preferences. Keep a copy of your signed and completed advance health care directive safe and accessible. This will help ensure that your wishes will be known at the critical time and carried out. Give a copy of your form to:

- The person you appoint as your agent and any alternate designated agents
- Your physician
- Your health care providers
- The health care institution that is providing your care