

# have you had the talk?



## TIPS FOR HAVING THE TALK

“Having the Talk” is simply about preparing in advance to deal with a medical event – even a routine one. Sharing your plans will give your loved ones confidence to assist you with a health related matter. Once you “have the talk,” your loved ones will have all the information they need: your health status, your doctors, prescriptions, your wishes, and their role in assisting you.

“Having the talk” is a practical step to take and it provides you and your loved ones with an opportunity to have a meaningful conversation about some of the big issues in life. Once you get this conversation going, you may be surprised at how enjoyable and enriching it is, and you might be surprised by what people say!

Here are some tips:

- Let your loved ones know you want to meet and share the plans you have made in the event of a routine medical procedure or other health-related event.
- Set a time and place and have a set plan for the information you want to share. (If it’s hard to find a time when everyone can meet, choose a time when you already know you’ll be together – like Thanksgiving or other holiday.)
- Select a location where you can talk comfortably.
- Have a specific timeframe for going through your plan and sharing your wishes. Two hours allows plenty of time to share the information and have a lively conversation about what you and your loved ones would want when faced with a medical situation.
- Getting together for “the talk” can and should be an enjoyable event. Have refreshments and encourage everyone to be comfortable.
- Make copies of all of your documents so they can be shared.
- Expect that there will be distractions and that the subject will be changed as the conversation gets going.
- Be prepared to bring the conversation back on track so that you accomplish the goals for the meeting.

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## TIPS FOR HAVING THE TALK *continued*

Topics to consider:

- Where to find medical information about you. Show them the toolkit. Show them the forms you completed. Now easy to find, they will know all of your doctors, prescriptions and diagnoses. Tell them where you will be keeping it.
- Current health status. Even if you are in perfect health, let them know. It is not uncommon to be presented with a routine procedure. If you go to the hospital, your family will have all the information they need to assist you. If you've been ill or had surgeries, give them an overview of what you have been dealing with. Don't get bogged down in details at this point.
- Let them know who you have selected to be your "patient advocate." (Make sure this person already has agreed to be your advocate and understands their role.)
- Tell them some of the situations you have considered and the kind of care you would want. These decisions are not set in stone. They can be changed at any time. The idea is to get family members to understand your basic philosophy about these matters so that they know what you'd want and can help ensure you get the care you'd want.
- Ask them if they have thought about the care they would want. Get them talking about their wishes and encourage them to follow a process to select a "patient advocate" and complete a process like the one you have.
- Ask them if they have questions.
- If there are conflicts in the family, this is an especially good time to talk about your wishes. Conflicts can be prevented during health care events by getting all parties on the same page in advance when it's clear that plans have been made by you for you.

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## INTERNET RESOURCES

This list of nonprofit resources was compiled to help you make informed choices about end-of-life issues. Information is available from these organizations at no cost to you. Generally speaking, if it isn't free, or they ask for anything besides your address... you don't want it!

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### AARP - End of Life Issues

[www.aarp.org/life/endoflife](http://www.aarp.org/life/endoflife)

Although many people would prefer not to think about the end of their lives, planning for the inevitable event increases the chances that your wishes will be met. You have a right to decide what kind and how much care you want or don't want when death is expected. You have a right to decide where you want to die and whom you wish to care for you. Since you may not have thought about those things before and may not be able to state those wishes when death is near, the time to plan is now.

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### Caring Connections

[www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org)

State-specific advance directives with instructions are available for free download after registration of name and email address. About How You LIVE empowers consumers to take action; specifically the campaign encourages people to: learn about your options for end-of-life services and care; implement plans to ensure your wishes are honored; and voice your decisions to family, friends and health care providers.

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### Caring Conversations

[www.practicalbioethics.org/cpb.aspx?pgID=886](http://www.practicalbioethics.org/cpb.aspx?pgID=886)

The Caring Conversations workbook provides a social ritual that helps loved ones plan for the end of life. Sharing the information in Caring Conversations allows others to understand and respect the preferences of patients who can no longer speak for themselves and eases the tension that patients and their families experience during a last illness. The workbook (also available in Spanish) is intended to help you, your family, and your friends think about these issues now, while you are able to respond to specific questions.

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### Compassion & Choices

[www.compassionandchoices.org](http://www.compassionandchoices.org)

Compassion & Choices is a nonprofit organization working to improve care and expand choice at the end of life. As a national organization with over 60 chapters and 30,000 members, Compassion & Choices helps patients and their loved ones face the end of life with facts and choices of action during a difficult time. They aggressively pursue legal reform to promote pain care, put teeth in advance directives and legalize physician aid in dying.

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### Funeral Consumers Alliance

[www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org)

The Funeral Consumers Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting a consumer's right to choose a meaningful, dignified, affordable funeral. They offer information on funeral choices to increase public awareness of funeral options, including how to care for your own dead without using a funeral home. The \$10 end-of-life planning kit: *Before I Go, You Should Know* – is the only item in this resource list that is an exception to the rule – if it isn't free, you don't want it.

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### Gift of Life

[www.giftoflifemichigan.org](http://www.giftoflifemichigan.org)

Gift of Life is the only non-profit full service organ and tissue recovery organization in Michigan since 1971. As an organization, the Gift of Life acts as an intermediary between the donor hospital and the recipient transplant center providing all of the services necessary for organ and tissue donation. The website has an online registry.

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**Hospice of Michigan**

[www.hom.org](http://www.hom.org)

Hospice of Michigan (HOM) is the largest nonprofit hospice organization in Michigan, providing comprehensive, compassionate comfort care to people with acute chronic illness and support to their loved ones. HOM started in 1979, and now serves more than 56 counties in the Lower Peninsula. The Open Access Policy assures that Hospice of Michigan will care for all who need and seek end-of-life services, regardless of age, diagnosis or ability to pay. The website offers an extensive array of resources for patients, caregivers and the medical community.

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**National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization**

[www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org)

Hospice and palliative care involve a team-oriented approach to expert medical care, pain management, and emotional and spiritual support expressly tailored to the patient's needs and wishes. Support is provided to the patient's loved ones as well. At the center of hospice and palliative care is the belief that each of us has the right to die pain-free and with dignity, and that our families will receive the necessary support to allow us to do so.

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**On Our Own Terms – Bill Moyers**

[www.pbs.org/wnet/onourown/terms](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/onourown/terms)

There is a great divide separating the kind of care Americans say they want at the end of life and what our culture currently provides. Surveys show that we want to die at home, free of pain, surrounded by the people we love. But the vast majority of us die in the hospital, alone, and experiencing unnecessary discomfort. Bill Moyers goes from the bedsides of the dying to the front lines of a movement to improve end-of-life care in ON OUR OWN TERMS: Moyers on Dying.

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**Peace of Mind**

[www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/Publications/PeaceofMind.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/Publications/PeaceofMind.pdf)

This free online booklet is designed to assist you in preplanning: personal records, medical records and forms on Michigan's Statutory Will and Patient Advocate law and organ donation. This booklet is not intended to replace the advice of a legal professional when it comes to making long-term care and end-of-life decisions. For additional information or if you are in need of a referral for legal counsel, please contact: State Bar of Michigan at (800) 968-1442 or see the following internet resource.

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**State Bar of Michigan**

[www.michbar.org/elderlaw/adpamphlet.cfm](http://www.michbar.org/elderlaw/adpamphlet.cfm)

One important area in which we exercise independence is in choosing the medical treatment we receive. Few would deny a competent adult has the right to consent to or refuse particular medical treatments or medically related services. Once you recognize your wishes, the process of planning is relatively simple and inexpensive or free. This website contains information on advance directives to assist you. The fill-in-the-blanks forms at the end of the website are but one option should you choose to proceed.

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**Will to Live**

[www.nrlc.org/euthanasia/willtolive/index.html](http://www.nrlc.org/euthanasia/willtolive/index.html)

This advance directive is published by the Right to Life and provides an alternative to the living will. By signing a Will to Live you help to protect your own life by making clear that you would want food and water and would want life-saving treatment except in the circumstances you yourself specify. Why Should I Sign a Will to Live? – To lessen the real and growing danger that you may be starved or denied necessary treatment when you cannot speak for yourself.

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## DID YOU KNOW?

1. **Have You Had the Talk** Campaign is brought to you by Hospice of Michigan.
2. Hospice of Michigan exists to provide expert, high quality, compassionate care to people who have life-limiting illnesses, and support for families.
3. Research shows that people who use hospice services live longer and have significantly better quality of life than those who do not elect to use hospice services.
4. Choosing hospice to help patients through a life-limiting illness is not giving up hope. It is a change in tactics. Hospice of Michigan maximizes quality of life through expert care and significant support to the patient and their family members.
5. Hospice of Michigan is the state's largest hospice serving 900 patients each day, and more than 4,500 people annually throughout the Lower Peninsula.
6. All hospices are not alike. You have a legal right to choose your hospice.
7. 28% of referrals to Hospice of Michigan are made by a family member or the patient themselves. All you have to do is call.
8. You don't have to wait for a physician or nurse to refer you to hospice, you can call Hospice of Michigan anytime, day or night.
9. People who use hospice services live longer than people who don't.
10. We bring the ER to you in the middle of the night... even when it's snowing.
11. We work to improve the care of the dying in Michigan through advocacy, education, legislation, research, etc...
12. Our families are our marketing plan. Thank you for spreading the news.
13. We provide hospice care in patients' homes, assisted living centers, nursing homes and hospitals.
14. Hospice of Michigan is a non-profit hospice. This is an important distinction among hospices. Our mission is to serve all who need and seek our care regardless of their age, diagnosis or ability to pay. Our commitment is to the best possible care. Unlike publicly traded hospices, we do not have the objective of earning a profit and returning profits to stockholders. The need to earn profits requires a limitation of care and the screening of incoming patients to take only those whose costs will be low.
15. Hospice of Michigan raises more than \$4 million each year to support our mission to serve all who need and seek our care regardless of age, diagnosis or ability to pay. As a non-profit organization, the community provides financial support through donations to ensure the maximum benefit to our patients and the community.
16. To make a donation in support of Hospice of Michigan, call (313) 578-6261 or (616) 356-5211 or go online to [www.hom.org](http://www.hom.org).
17. At Hospice of Michigan, hospice care is all we do. We are experts at caring for people at this important stage of life.
18. Hospice of Michigan: ask for us by name. We are Michigan's hospice.