

Definitions to Know

Advance directive- A written document (form) that tells what a person wants or doesn't want if he/she in the future can't make his/her wishes known about medical treatment.

Artificial nutrition and hydration- When food and water are fed to a person through a tube.

Autopsy- An examination done on a dead body to find the cause of death.

Comfort care- Care that helps a person keep comfortable but doesn't make him/her get well. Bathing, turning and keeping a persons' lips moist are types of comfort care.

CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) - Treatment to try to restart a person's breathing or heartbeat. CPR may be done by pushing on the chest, by putting a tube down the throat or by other treatments.

Durable power of attorney for health care- An advance directive that names someone to make medical decisions for a person if in the future he/she cannot make his/her own medical decisions.

Life-sustaining treatment- Any medical treatment that is used to keep a person from dying. A breathing machine, CPR and artificial nutrition and hydration are examples of life-sustaining treatments.

Living will- An advance directive that tells what medical treatment a person does or does not want if he/she is not able to make his/her wishes known.

Organ and tissue donation- When a person permits his/her organs (such as the eyes or kidneys) and other parts of the body (such as the skin) to be removed after death to be transplanted for use by another person or to be used for experimental purposes.

Persistent vegetative state- When a person is unconscious with no hope of regaining consciousness even with medical treatment. The body may move and the eyes may be open, but as far as anyone can tell, the person can't think or respond.

Terminal condition- An ongoing condition caused by serious injury or illness that has no cure and from which doctors can expect the person to die even with medical treatment. Life- sustaining treatments will only prolong the dying process if the person is suffering from a terminal condition.