



# Glossary of Terms



*Let us help you and your loved ones get the best medical care you can*

***Advance Care Planning:*** The process of thinking through and communicating to others the kinds of medical care you would want if you were unable to make decisions for yourself due to injury or illness. This process includes completing documents.

***Advance Directives:*** Documents which relay your wishes about medical treatment if you are too sick or unable to express your preferences directly. Examples include health care proxy, living will, DNR.

***Alternative Treatment:*** A wide range of health care practices and products that are not part of conventional medicine, which are used in place of conventional medicine. An example is the use of herbs alone to treat cancer instead of following the recommendations of an oncologist for chemotherapy.

***Artificial Nutrition and Hydration/Feeding Tube:*** Tube feeding replaces eating and drinking when a person can no longer swallow. A tube is placed directly into the nose, stomach, upper intestine, or vein to provide liquids and needed nourishment.

***“Capacity” To Make Medical Decisions:*** Your ability to understand the following: the nature of an illness, your treatment choices and possible outcomes, and the risks and benefits of an option so that you can make a responsible decision.

***“Clear and Convincing Proof” of the Person’s Health Care Wishes:*** Evidence, which may include oral or written statements made by the patient, while he/she was alert and mentally competent, about the kinds of medical care he/she would want if unable to express this due to injury or illness.

***Complementary Treatment:*** A wide range of health care practices and products that are not part of conventional medicine, which are used together with conventional medicine, to enhance well-being and lower stress and worry. Examples include meditation, medical massage, or the use of fragrances from the oils of flowers to reduce discomfort (“aromatherapy”).

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***CPR - Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation:*** A medical procedure to restart the heart and restore breathing when these functions suddenly stop. Methods include: chest compression, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, medication injected into the chest, and electric shock.

***Diagnosis:*** The process of identifying an illness by the signs and symptoms. This is done with medical tests and procedures such as x-rays, blood tests, sonograms, computerized scans, and biopsies.

***DNR - Do Not Resuscitate:*** Instructs medical professionals *not to perform CPR* (emergency treatment to restart the heart or lungs.) See “CPR” in glossary.

***Ethical Will:*** A written or verbal recording that tries to summarize the wisdom we have learned in our lifetime. It is an effort to transmit our most important experience(s) to someone we love, and may include what we want most from them. It is not a legal document. See Chapter 11

***Feeding Tube:*** See “Artificial Nutrition and Hydration.”

***Health Care Agent:*** The person you appoint to make medical decisions for you in the event that you are unable to communicate your wishes due to illness or injury. This person may be a relative, friend, or a lawyer, but *not* your doctor.

***Health Care Proxy:*** A legal document in which you choose another adult whom you trust to make your medical decisions for you if you aren’t able to express your preferences yourself.

***Hospice:*** A program of care in the patient’s home, a nursing home, or a hospital for people with a very serious illness whose outlook for survival is limited. The focus of care is helping the patient to be as comfortable as possible, and includes excellent pain control. (There is no exact translation of the word “hospice” into Russian.)

***IV - Intravenous therapy:*** The dispensing of liquid substances directly into the vein. If this is a continuous process, it is called an “IV drip.”

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***Journaling, or Keeping a Diary:*** Writing about one's thoughts, feelings, moods, and reactions that may be too private to express to others. Journaling is like sharing one's inner emotions with a dearest friend to whom you can say anything.

***Living Will:*** A document in which a person explains what medical treatments he/she would want to accept and which to refuse, especially at the end of life. The more specific the person is, the more useful this document will be. (There is no standard form for a living will.) See Chapter 8.

***Mechanical Ventilator/Respirator/Intubation:*** A machine to help people breathe when they cannot breathe sufficiently on their own. The respirator puts air into their lungs with a tube that is placed into the mouth and down the windpipe.

***Medical Massage Therapy/Massage:*** A method of causing relaxation by rubbing, manipulating, kneading, and tapping the body, especially the back, performed by trained, licensed therapists.

***Nurse Manager:*** A nurse who is an administrator, supervises nursing staff, and is responsible for the services and quality of hospital care on a 24-hour basis.

***Nurse Practitioner/Nurse Clinician:*** A registered nurse who has advanced training to diagnose and manage illness, and who often works closely with a doctor. In some states he/she can prescribe medication.

***Palliative Care:*** Emphasizes quality of life and helps people with chronic or life-limiting illness to be as comfortable as possible. This care involves a team approach for: expert medical attention, pain control and relief of symptoms. Care is specially tailored to the patient's needs and wishes, and also offered to the family.

***Patient Representative:*** An employee of a hospital who helps patients with complaints, advocating for them around a specific issue. The patient representative serves as a liaison between the hospital and patient. One can reach this person by asking a nurse or dialing "O" and asking for the patient representative.

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***Persistent Vegetative State (PVS):*** A condition in which a person is unable to speak or respond to requests. This person has lost his/her awareness of their surroundings and their ability to think. Breathing and circulation remain intact. PVS sometimes follows a coma.

***Physician's Assistant:*** A health care professional trained to provide basic medical services such as physical exams or minor procedures, usually under a doctor's supervision.

***Primary Caregiver:*** The person who has significant responsibility for managing and caring for someone's health and well-being, once they have been diagnosed with a debilitating medical condition, chronic or life-limiting.

***Prognosis:*** The likely course and outcome of an illness, and the chance of recovery from or recurrence of an illness.

***Seizure:*** A temporary change in the function of the brain which can cause changes in body movement, awareness, or behavior. Seizures are often associated with the sudden, involuntary contraction of a group of muscles. Treatment is a specialty of neurology.

***Social Worker/Medical Social Worker:*** A trained professional who helps people with information, practical aid, referrals, and emotional support. She/he is a member of the health care team in the hospital, and is often responsible for planning a person's return home from the hospital. She/he helps people navigate the system and to communicate with other members of your team. The social worker is a good person to start with if your relative is hospitalized and you don't know to whom to turn first.

***Visualization/Guided Imagery:*** A relaxation technique using the power of the mind to create a detailed mental picture of a scene or memory which is calm and peaceful.