



Communication guide

Who is this guide for?

This guide is intended for people who are drawing up an advance directive (AD), as well as for potential healthcare proxies or loved ones who would like to raise the subject of an AD with someone close to them but are not sure how.



Preparation

- 1 **Arrange a time** when both you and your healthcare proxy have enough time to talk about the advance directive (AD).
- 2 **Find a quiet place for a private conversation**, where you will not be disturbed.
- 3 **Give the other person** your full attention.
- 4 **Be patient and understanding.** Many people are not used to talking about topics such as illness or death outside the doctor's surgery.
- 5 **Think in advance about** which questions matter to you and what information could help your healthcare proxy if you lose decision-making capacity.
- 6 **Take turns asking each other questions** and talk about each other's attitudes to life and ideas about medical treatment.



Note: It is a good idea to return to the conversation about an AD when health or life circumstances change. The FMH (Swiss Medical Association) recommends reviewing the advance directive every two years and dating and signing it again.



Example questions

These questions can help you start and guide the conversation. They are worded so that your healthcare proxy or someone close to you can ask them to you directly. However, be open and flexible in adapting the conversation to your particular situation.

1 Starting the conversation

- Have you ever thought about what would happen if you became ill / if your health got worse?
- What comes to mind when you imagine a scenario like this?

2 Healthcare proxy

- Who would you trust to make decisions about your health on your behalf if you could no longer decide for yourself?
- Why do you see this person as a possible healthcare proxy?
- What role should your healthcare proxy / your loved ones play in your medical treatment? What do you expect of them (healthcare proxy / loved ones)?

3 Values, beliefs and goals

- What does “living well” mean to you?
- What brings you joy in life?
- What expectations, wishes and hopes do you have for your future?
- What would you really like to experience in your life? What would you still like to achieve?
- Are your faith or spirituality important to you? What effect do they have on your medical treatment and/or your ideas about health?

4 State of health

- When you think about your health – what matters to you?
- What comes to mind when you imagine being seriously ill?
- How do you perceive your state of health? What do healthcare professionals say about your state of health? What do you yourself understand by it?
- Do you have any concerns or worries about your health?
- What matters most to you when you think about your medical treatment and care? What do you expect from them?
- How would you like to be cared for if you can no longer look after yourself?
- What do you imagine when you think about the last phase of life?

5 Situations

- What comes to mind when you imagine no longer being able to act independently (i.e. lacking decision-making capacity)?
- What would you want your healthcare proxy / loved ones to do in such a case?
- In which situations would you want which medical treatment? What role does the medical prognosis play in your treatment wishes? How do you feel about life-sustaining measures?

6 Organ donation

- How do you feel about organ donation?
- Would you like to donate organs and tissues after your death – all of them or only certain ones?
- Which considerations are important to you in this decision?