

Five Wishes®

Talking About Your Wishes

The Five Wishes document walks you through the five most important things to talk about when it comes to advance care planning. Once you've introduced the topic, you can use the document to review each wish, and talk about what matters most to you. Here are some things to consider for each wish.



WISH 1: *The Person I Want to Make Health Care Decisions for Me When I Can't Make Them for Myself.*

Wish 1 lets you choose the person who can do the best job carrying out your wishes when you can't speak for yourself.

- Page 4 of *Five Wishes* includes some considerations for picking the right person to be your health care agent. Use this information to talk with your loved ones about making the best choice. Sometimes we feel obligation or guilt about naming a certain person, but these are not good reasons on which to base your choice.
- Tell the person you choose why you think they are the best choice, and make sure they understand your reasons. Review together the kinds of decisions they might make for you on page 5 of *Five Wishes*, and make sure they accept the role.
- Make sure to tell everyone in your family about your choice for Wish 1. If you didn't pick a certain person as your health care agent and you are worried about how they will feel, tell them what else they can do for you if you become ill. Sometimes just knowing they can help in some way is enough.

WISH 2: *My Wish for the Kind of Medical Treatment I Want or Don't Want.*

Wish 2 is a *living will*. It lets you put in writing the kind of medical treatment you want or don't want if you become seriously ill and can't communicate to anyone.

- Review the life support treatments listed on page 6, and the end-of-life situations on page 7 of *Five Wishes* with your family.
- Talk about experiences you have had with people in these situations, your thoughts and feelings about these experiences, and what meaning or lessons you took away from them. You want to talk not only about your choices, but the reasons they matter to you.
- If family members feel differently about these choices, that is okay. Listen to one another, and make sure everyone understands that each person can make their own decisions for themselves. The idea is for everyone to respect one another's choices, understand the reasons for them, and honor them when the time comes – even if they wouldn't make the same choice.



WISH 3: My Wish for How Comfortable I Want to Be.

Wish 3 helps you describe what would create a comforting environment for you at the end of life.

- Review the items under Wish 3 together. This is a time when you can discuss what brings you comfort, and the special things you would want to have around you at the end of life.
- Make sure to talk about your thoughts and feelings around having pain and symptoms controlled, and what you would or would not be willing to “trade off” for comfort. Talk about whether being alert or being drowsy would matter to you in having your pain relieved.
- In addition, make sure to talk about thoughts and feelings about having hospice care and support.

WISH 4: My Wish for How I Want People to Treat Me.

Wish 4 lets you describe in detail how you want to be treated so that your dignity can be maintained.

- Review the items under Wish 4 together. Talk about what the kinds of personal interactions and support you value, and how you want other people to treat you. Everyone defines dignity differently, so explore what it means to you.

WISH 5: My Wish for What I Want my Loved Ones and Health Care Team to Know.

Wish 5 gives you a chance to tell others what you want them to know about you, how you want to be remembered, and to express other things that might be in your heart, like forgiveness.

- Review together the items under Wish 5, and talk about what would be most important for your loved ones to know. This is a way to communicate what is most meaningful to you.
- In addition, discuss what you think would be most important for your health care team to know about you in order to provide good care, and to understand you as the special, unique person that you are.