



DO I NEED A *LIVING WILL*?

BY BETH JACOBSEN

The short answer is yes.

A living will, sometimes called a directive to physicians or advanced directive, is a legal document that details medical interventions you're comfortable with being used to prolong your life should you become unable to consent to treatment. The directives will only apply to your care if you have an incurable terminal condition. Much like estate planning documents, healthcare documents should be completed before you're in crisis. An accident can

happen at any time, so it's important to outline your personal choices regarding end-of-life measures.

Thinking about your mortality isn't an easy subject. Should you become incapacitated without a living will, your immediate family will be responsible for making end-of-life decisions on your behalf. By outlining your wishes, you're eliminating the often stressful, sometimes controversial, decisions your family and healthcare providers are otherwise required to make.

Completing a living will should give you and your family peace of mind. The authority granted will expire when the grantor dies.

Drafting a Living Will

Living wills can be drafted by an attorney. In Wisconsin, residents can find a free form through the Department of Health Services website, dhs.wisconsin.gov. When determining your end-of-life wishes, you'll have to consider your personal values and/or religious beliefs.

Some topics addressed in a living will are:

- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)
- Do Not Intubate (DNI)
- Mechanical Ventilation
- Dialysis
- Blood Transfusions
- Tube Feeding
- Antibiotics or Antiviral Medications
- Palliative Care
- Hospice Care
- Organ and Tissue Donation

It's vital to discuss the medical terminology within your living will with a healthcare professional to ensure you are completing the form correctly.

Sharing Your Wishes

One of the most important steps after completing a living will is sharing your wishes with your immediate family and those closest to you. It's also recommended that you provide a copy to your primary care physician or your local hospital to keep in your file. Like all important documents, you should also keep an original copy in a safe place where it can be easily found in the event of an emergency.

A living will is one of several tools that can be used to give advance directives about your end-of-life wishes. You may also consider completing a healthcare power of attorney form. By naming a healthcare power of attorney, you give another person the authority to make healthcare decisions on your behalf if you're unable to consent to treatment. That person has authority until your condition becomes terminal, at which

point end-of-life measures are outlined in your living will.

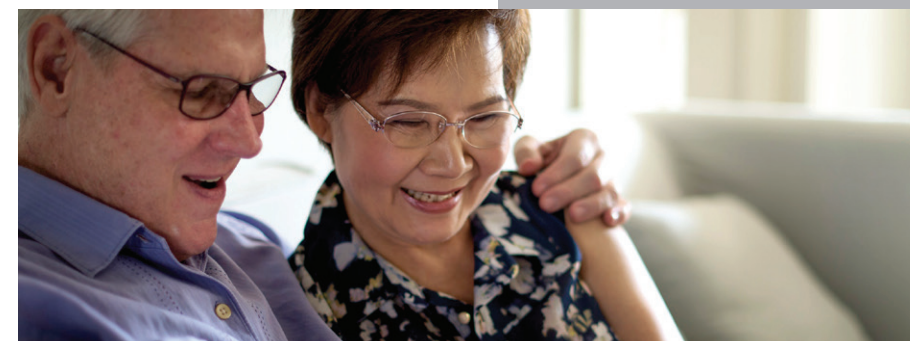
Finally, it's recommended that you review your estate planning and healthcare documents routinely to confirm your wishes or amend documents if circumstances have changed. If you have a life transition, such as a new medical diagnosis, a change in marital status, or the loss of a spouse, you may want to review your living will, power of attorney, and estate planning documents previously completed.

For more information on estate planning, visit SVAFinancial.com/Trust.

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ADVANCE HEALTHCARE DIRECTIVES

An advance healthcare directive is also known as a living will. It's important to put your legal and medical preferences in writing. Visit the Legal category in the General section for assistance to learn about the important options you have to protect your wishes if and when you are unable.

WISCONSIN MEDICAL SOCIETY
(866) 442-3800
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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Have a plan in place before an emergency. Communicate your plans with family, friends, and neighbors.

PACK AN EMERGENCY KIT

with first aid supplies, blankets or sleeping bag, battery-powered radio, flashlights, extra batteries, weather radio.

If you have a pet, plan ahead for pet needs, including supplies of food and water and a pet carrier.

Have prescription medications and any special medical supplies ready.

Place the following items in a plastic, lidded container:

- Three-day supply of water (about five gallons for each person)
- Three-day supply of nonperishable food
- Three-day supply of high-energy foods, such as granola bars, trail mix, peanut butter, jelly, and crackers

You can find more information on emergency plans and supply kits at ready.gov.

