

Advance directive | Explanatory notes

The «FMH/SAMS advance directive» is issued jointly by the Swiss Medical Association (FMH) and the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS).

What you should know

Anyone with mental capacity can draw up an advance directive and thus specify the medical measures to which they do or do not consent in the event of becoming incapacitated.

The more clearly defined your advance directive is and the more specifically it relates to your current medical situation, the less likely it is that problems of interpretation will arise and the more weight will be attached to the directive in the decision-making process.

A counselling session can provide valuable support in drawing up an advance directive and is therefore to be recommended.

In the advance directive, you can appoint a trusted person to act as your healthcare proxy.

The advance directive can only serve its purpose if it is actually available to the health care team. You should therefore ensure that it will be found if the need arises. It is important that the people who are likely to be contacted by the health care team in the event of your incapacity should be aware of the advance directive.

For this reason, you should give both your general practitioner and your healthcare proxy a copy of the advance directive. In your purse/wallet, you should carry a note indicating that you have drawn up an advance directive, where it is kept, and the address(es) of the healthcare proxy (proxies) you have appointed.

Two versions available

To meet individual requirements, FMH and SAMS offer two different options for the advanced directive: a more detailed version and a short version, as well as a notice card for your wallet.

The short version includes specifications of wishes which – experience has shown – reflect the preferences of the majority of people who draw up an advance directive. It contains minimum specifications regarding important questions which arise regularly.

If you would like to specify additional details, or if the short version does not reflect your own ideas, you can opt for the detailed version. Here, you can indicate your views on possible treatment goals and describe your motives and values. You do not have to take a view on all the points covered; you may confine yourself to what you regard as essential and leave the other sections blank.