

# Discussing your future with your family doctor or nurse practitioner

## Talking about your future is important

Talking about your future allows you to express your hopes and fears and will let your family doctor or nurse practitioner know what is important to you. It will also help you develop the best possible treatment plan together. Patients who express their wishes often feel less anxious and more in control of their situation.

## It is important to talk about your future now

When you are facing a life-threatening illness there can be many decisions to make about treatment and care. It is good to talk about the future when your illness is serious but stable. Expressing your wishes will prevent unwanted treatments and interventions in the future. You can always change your mind later and adjust your goals and plans.

## Preparing for this meeting helps

Have a discussion with your loved ones first. They might have other questions that you didn't think of yourself. There may also be a time you have to rely on them to make decisions for you. Knowing what you want will ease the burden on your loved ones of making hard decisions for you if you cannot speak for yourself.

## Some questions you might want to think of, before talking to your doctor or nurse practitioner:

- What would you like to know about your illness and what is likely to be ahead?
- What kind of information would help you make decisions about your future?
- What is most important for you to have a good quality of life?
- What are your fears about your illness?
- What kind of medical care do you not want?
- What do you think it would be like to share these thoughts with your family?
- If you haven't already identified a substitute decision maker, who would be able to fill that role?

## Bringing others to your appointment can be helpful

It is a good idea to bring your substitute decision maker with you when you talk to your family doctor or nurse practitioner about your future. A substitute decision maker is someone who you appoint to make the decisions for you if there comes a time you are no longer able to make them yourself. Making your substitute decision maker part of the conversation about your future gives them a chance to know your wishes and become more comfortable with their role.

This is the beginning of an ongoing conversation. You might have other questions or concerns in the future. Your family doctor or nurse practitioner will be there to support you and answer your questions along the way.