

Do You Need a Health Care Power of Attorney and Living Will?



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Health Care Power of Attorney

A health care power of attorney allows you to name an agent (usually a family member or friend) to make medical decisions if you are unable to make them yourself. This document may be used during a short period of incapacity, or on a long-term basis if, for instance, you develop dementia or Alzheimer's. A health care power of attorney is an important document, as it allows medical providers to know to whom they should be speaking and from whom they should take direction.

Living Will

A living will is a document that allows you to designate preferences in an end-of-life situation: specifically, the wish to be taken off life support if two doctors agree that you have totally lost higher brain function, or that death is imminent and you will not recover with further treatment.

You can sign both a health care power of attorney and a living will, or you can choose only to sign a health care power of attorney.