

# PREPARING FOR LIFE'S "WHAT IF'S"

Routine check-ups are part of great healthcare. So are open and honest conversations about what's important to you. Plan ahead and choose a trusted, reliable person to help make healthcare choices for you. This person will make decisions for you if you have a sudden event or illness which prevents you from doing so.

## **TALK ABOUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT**

Explain what is important to you, such as your goals, values, and preferences. Let us know how these shape the decisions you make about your healthcare.

## **CHOOSE SOMEONE WHO CAN SPEAK FOR YOU**

Choose a trusted, reliable person to make sure that your healthcare wishes are known and honored. This person will speak for you if you are ever temporarily or permanently unable to make decisions for yourself. This person is called a "healthcare agent." A healthcare agent must be willing to accept this role. Your healthcare agent will talk to you about your goals, values and preferences and respect your decisions. And this person will make decisions for you in difficult moments if needed.

## **DOCUMENT YOUR WISHES AND SHARE YOUR PLAN**

Complete a healthcare proxy form which is an advance directive and share it with your healthcare agent, doctor, hospital, and those you care about. When you document your wishes, it becomes an important way to make sure they are honored. It is also a vital part of advance care planning.

The Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) form may be helpful if you have a serious health condition. The MOLST helps you and your loved ones plan ahead for health care decisions that may need to be made. It would be needed if a complication from your illness makes you unable to communicate.

The MOLST form is signed by a doctor as a medical order and is valid in any health care setting, and home.

## **LET YOUR HEALTHCARE AGENT MAKE DECISIONS FOR YOU WHEN NEEDED**

Your health care agent would only begin to make healthcare decisions after your doctor decides you cannot do so. As long as you are able, you will have the right to make your own health care decisions.

## **UPDATE YOUR PLAN AT ANY TIME**

Advance care planning is an ongoing process, not a one-time event; you can update your advance care plan at any time.

We understand that you may feel uncomfortable talking about these topics. Starting the conversation is an important first step which can make things easier in the future. If you plan ahead (at any age or health status), this will ensure your health care wishes are known. It is an important gift to yourself and to your loved ones.

## **QUESTIONS**

For more information and for help with completing a health care proxy form or MOLST, ask your healthcare team or call the Advance Care Planning Program at 212.263.0416.