How Will My Proxy Know What I Want?

It’s important to plan a conversation with your Health Care Proxy. Imagine that you’re seriously injured or ill and your Proxy is called. Would he/she know what you’d want? Help make sure you’re both ready. Set aside a time and place to have a conversation with your Proxy and perhaps other people close to you. Think about the following as you plan your conversation. For more tips, see the Conversation Starter Kit at www.bidmc.org/conversationready.

Who? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

When you have your conversation with your Proxy, who else should be there? These people might be called upon to help the Proxy make tough decisions. Some possibilities are:

- Parents
- Friends
- Children
- Partner/spouse
- Caregiver
- Spiritual/religious advisor
- Other ________________

When? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Pick a date and time when you can have a relaxed conversation. (Remember, it often feels like it’s “too early” to talk about this, until suddenly it’s “too late.”) You might want to think about having the conversation:

- Before your next doctor’s appointment
- Before the baby arrives
- Before you get sick (or get sick again)
- Before a child moves away from home
- Before the baby arrives
- Before you get sick (or get sick again)

When will you have your conversation?
Date: _____________________  Time: _____________________

Where? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Pick a location where you won’t be interrupted and that’s comfortable for everyone. Some ideas are:

- At the kitchen table
- Sitting outside
- On a long drive
- At a spiritual/religious place
- Other

How? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Try starting the conversation with something like: “I’d like you to be my Health Care Proxy. If I get injured or seriously ill someday, you could be called on to speak for me. I want you to know what matters to me so that you can be my voice without having to guess or worry about what to do.”

What? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Here are some things to think and talk about:

- When you think of being seriously ill or injured, or being in the last phase of your life, what’s most important to you? How long you live or the quality of your life?
- Are there any particular milestones or events that you’d like to be around for, if possible?
- Are there certain types of treatment you would or would not want? Why or why not? Do you have specific concerns?
- Are there certain religious or ethical views that should be considered in planning your care?
- Where would you want—or not want—to receive care (for instance, in a hospital, at home, in a nursing facility)?
- Are there people you’d want your Proxy to contact—or not contact—to help him/her make decisions?
- What are your thoughts about organ donation?
- When would it be okay to shift from trying to cure a disease to focusing mostly on comfort?
- Are there circumstances that would make life feel unbearable to you?
- Are there situations in which you would want to limit life-sustaining treatment?