



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

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The Healthy Journey

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH • NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

Advance Care Planning

Sometimes medical problems prevent people from making health care decisions. Planning is important before you need health care. This is especially true before you have a medical problem. An *advance directive* allows you to leave instructions for your loved ones and medical provider. These people can make health care decisions for you based on your wishes.

Advance Directives and HANDLS

During your HANDLS visit, you may fill out an advance directive form. This form is not required. Completing the form is your personal choice. HANDLS staff will explain this form to you. This form is specific to medical research like HANDLS. It allows you to do 2 things:

- (1) Choose a substitute decision maker
- (2) State your wishes for medical research participation

The person you choose to make decisions for you is called a *substitute decision maker*. This person can make decisions about your HANDLS visit if you are

unable to decide for yourself. You should choose someone you trust. Many people choose close relatives like a spouse, child, brother, or sister. Sometimes, a substitute decision maker is called a legally authorized representative.

You can make advance plans so you get what you want even if you are not capable of deciding

You may list your wishes for future HANDLS visits on the advance directive form. If you lose the ability to make decisions, you may keep participating in HANDLS if your decision maker agrees. You can select any of these options on the form:


- You do not want to participate in HANDLS if you lose the ability to make decisions
- You are willing to participate in HANDLS if it will help you
- You are willing to participate in HANDLS if it will not help you medically, but could help others and involves minimal risk
- You are willing to participate in HANDLS if it will not help you medically, but could help others and involves more than minimal risk

An advance directive is used only if you cannot make medical decisions on your own. A substitute decision maker cannot make healthcare decisions for you if you can make them yourself. Here are examples of when you may not be able to make healthcare decisions on your own:

- You were diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease
- You had a serious accident
- You had a stroke

GETTING YOUR AFFAIRS IN ORDER: Advance Care Planning

Making healthcare decisions for yourself or someone who is no longer able to do so can be overwhelming. That’s why it’s important to get a clear idea about preferences and arrangements while you can make decisions and participate in legal and financial planning together.



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Informed Consent

A staff member will explain the HANDLS study to you before you agree to participate. You will learn about the HANDLS purpose, tests offered, risks and benefits, and compensation. This process is called informed consent. You must give consent before any tests are offered. If you can make your own medical decisions, you can provide informed consent if you are willing to participate.

If you cannot make your own medical decisions, your substitute decision maker can help. If you previously signed an advance medical directive form with HANDLS, the decision maker can sign an informed consent form on your behalf.

Other Documents

Other types of advance care documents are wills, medical directives, and power of attorney documents. It helps to speak to an expert about these legal documents. Doctors and social workers can answer questions about your healthcare needs. Lawyers can explain and prepare these documents for you.

- You can talk to your doctor about medical directives during your annual check-up.
- Talking to a social worker or a lawyer can be free. The Enoch Pratt Free Library has office hours for free meetings with social workers and lawyers.
- For information on the Social Worker in the Library Program, email socialworker@prattlibrary.org, call 443-418-3873, or visit <https://www.prattlibrary.org/services/social-worker-in-the-library>.
- For information on the Lawyer in the Library Program, email virtualcommunitylawyer@mdlab.org, call 443-451-2805, or visit <https://www.prattlibrary.org/services/lawyer-in-the-library>.

To learn more about advance care planning, visit <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/advance-care-planning-health-care-directives>.

Flu Shots

Millions of Americans get the flu each year. The flu is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. It spreads easily. Flu symptoms are coughing, sore throat, runny nose, fever, body aches, and fatigue. You can prevent the flu by:

- Getting a flu shot
- Washing your hands often
- Staying away from people who are sick



Pharmacies and grocery stores offer flu shots. Your healthcare provider can give you a flu shot in their office. You can also visit <https://www.vaccines.gov/> or call 1-800-232-0233 to find flu shot locations in your zip code. If you don't have health insurance, you can call 311 to review your flu shot options in Baltimore City.

COVID-19 Booster Shots

Vaccines reduce the risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death from a virus. A booster shot is an extra vaccine dose. This extra dose helps your body fight infection by increasing your protection against a virus.

The newest round of COVID-19 booster shots protects against the original virus and COVID-19 variants. It is called a bivalent booster. To learn more about COVID-19 variants, visit <https://handls.nih.gov/news/2022-1.pdf>.

Vaccinations protect you from viruses

If your primary vaccine series was Pfizer, Moderna, or Johnson & Johnson, you may get a new booster if you are age 18+ and it has been 2 months since your last shot. You may get a new booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna. To learn more, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>.

You can schedule a booster shot the same way you scheduled your last COVID-19 vaccine. You can register for your primary series or new booster shot of the COVID-19 vaccine by visiting <https://covax.baltimore-city.gov/en-US/> or calling 443-984-8650. Bring your COVID-19 vaccination card to your booster shot appointment. According to the CDC, you can get a flu shot and COVID-19 shot at the same time.

The Midterm General Election

This November, you can vote in the midterm General Election.

- Election Day is on November 8, 2022.
- Early voting is from October 27-November 3, 2022.

You can vote for Governor, Attorney General, Comptroller, and U.S. Senator. You can also vote on laws that could be passed in Maryland. To see a list of people running for office, visit https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2022/general_candidates/index.html.

These officials are elected to make decisions that can help you and your community. Voting allows you to support a candidate who shares your values. You can also vote to support a law that could make a difference in your life. Your voice deserves to be heard!

Where can I vote?

You may vote in-person at your assigned polling place. To find your polling place, visit <https://voter-services.elections.maryland.gov/PollingPlaceSearch> or call 410-269-2840.



You may also vote by mail. If you requested a mail-in ballot, you must submit it by November 8th. You can place your ballot in the mail or take it to a drop box. A list of drop boxes can be found at https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/documents/2022_GG_Drop-BoxLocations_English.pdf.

To check your voters registration status, visit <https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/VoterSearch>

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), suicide is the 12th leading cause of death in the United States. In 2020, over 45,000 Americans died by suicide, and an estimated 1.2 million people attempted suicide.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers and counselors. People in crisis or distress receive free confidential support when they contact the Lifeline. This service is available all day everyday. This Lifeline also supports people who are concerned about loved ones.

988 is the new three-digit phone number that connects callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Previously, people could reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by calling 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This phone number will continue to function. 988 was created because it is a shorter and easier number to remember during an emergency.

There are many ways to connect with a counselor through the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:

- Call or text 988
- Online chat <https://988lifeline.org/>

If you are concerned about a loved one's mental health, there are steps you can take to help:

- Look for risk factors and warning signs. Some risk factors include mental health disorders, substance use disorders, trauma history, loss, past suicide attempts, and access to firearms. Some warning signs include talking about wanting to die, expressing feelings of hopelessness, withdrawal from others, gaining access to lethal items such as buying a gun, or increasing alcohol and/or drug use. For more information about risk factors and warning signs, visit <https://988lifeline.org/how-we-can-all-prevent-suicide/>.
- Ask your loved one about their mental health. Specifically ask if they have thought about harming themselves. Asking a loved one if they have considered self-harm or suicide is very important for prevention.
- Create a safe environment. If possible, reduce access to lethal items such as weapons, illegal drugs, and



prescriptions. Ask if your loved one would consider removing these items from their home.

- Create a safety plan. Save phone numbers for the following: 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, 911, your loved one's healthcare or mental health provider, and supportive contacts like family and friends.
- Find a mental health provider. If your loved one does not have a mental health provider, this website helps locate local support groups and therapists <https://988lifeline.org/help-yourself/>. The Pro Bono Counseling Project offers free therapy in Maryland. Contact <https://probonocounseling.org/> or call 410-825-1001 for more information.
- Tell your loved one that you care. Many people struggle to talk about mental health due to stigma. Your support could be an important protective factor for your loved one.

For more information, visit <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention>.



Contacting HANDLS

If you'd like to be added to the HANDLS email list, please message us at handls@mail.nih.gov.

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Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.