

Planning for Healthy Aging Worksheets



Advance Care Planning

Making Future Health Care Decisions

Advance care planning is the process of thinking about, and writing down, your wishes or instructions for future health care treatment in the event you become incapable of deciding for yourself. Advance care planning gives you a voice and also gives your family or friends the knowledge and tools they may need to make decisions on your behalf.

Questions to think about when planning for your future health care needs:

Have you written down your beliefs, values and wishes? Writing down your beliefs, values and wishes for future health care is an advance care plan. Your advance care plan lets others know what the decisions are that you would make for yourself.

Do your family, friends and health care providers know what your health care wishes are? By planning ahead, you provide your health care team and loved ones with information to guide them in your care and ease the burden of your loved ones at a difficult time.

If you were no longer capable, who would you want to make health care or financial decisions on your behalf?

Do your loved ones know where all your vital documents are? (e.g. your will, insurance or advance care planning documents)

What health care treatments would you want to agree to, or refuse, if a health care provider recommended them to you? Think about your beliefs, values and wishes, as well as possible scenarios, and talk about them with family or friends, and health care providers.

Are you registered on the BC Transplant organ donation registry? For more information about the registry, visit www.transplant.bc.ca or call BC Transplant at 1-800-663-6189.

Would you accept or refuse life support and/or life-prolonging medical interventions? For which conditions and when? Some of the hardest decisions deal with the use of life support and life-prolonging medical interventions. Your advance care plan can address different situations, such as your hospital care during and after routine surgery, care in the event of an accident, or end-of-life care decisions.

For more information and resources to help you plan see:

[Advance Care Planning](#) (link)

[My Voice: Expressing My Wishes for Future Health Care Treatment](#) (link). This workbook includes pages and forms you can use if you wish to make an advance care plan, representation agreement and/or an advance directive.

[BC Transplant](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)



Community Engagement and Connection

Planning to stay socially connected and engaged in your community

Research suggests that older adults who remain socially active and participate in their community maintain their mental and physical health longer. In fact, people with strong social networks tend to be more active, feel happier, and are more supported.

Questions to think about when planning for community engagement and social connections:

How do you stay connected with your friends, family and community?

Do you plan varied and regular interactions with others? Consider volunteering, taking a class, mentoring, working, or participating in community activities.

Should you make more of an effort to stay socially engaged? Social interaction helps maintain cognitive functions and support mental and emotional health and well-being.

Do you have friends you can share a walk with, or talk to when you need an ear?

Do you make an effort to connect with different generations? Older adults who have intergenerational contact report less depression and greater life satisfaction.

Is your community age-friendly and does it support social interaction? Age-friendly communities provide welcoming public spaces, accessible transportation, affordable housing options, employment and volunteer opportunities, as well as information and services that fit the needs of seniors.

What change would you like to see in your community?

Does your community serve your needs? Consider how you can be involved in making your community work for you, whether it's through having more age-appropriate programming at the local community centre, to creating a community garden, planting more trees, organizing transportation, or installing more benches, cross walks or pathways.

[Community Engagement and Connection](#) (link)

[Social Connections](#) (link)

[Volunteering](#) (link)

[Age-friendly Communities](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)



Fall Prevention

Falls are the main reason why older adults lose their independence. Although fall risk typically increases with age, falls are not an inevitable part of aging and can be prevented.

There are many ways to help reduce your risk of falling: increasing your physical activity and muscle strength; improving your mobility and balance; eating well and ensuring adequate levels of vitamin D and calcium through diet and supplements; having annual vision checks; reviewing all medications with a doctor or pharmacist; and improving safety around the home and outdoors.

Questions to consider when thinking about preventing falls:

Do you get enough exercise? Exercise is good for your heart and circulation, as well as for your bones, muscles and balance.

What are you doing to improve your balance and mobility? Do exercises that challenge your balance, such as Tai Chi or yoga.

Do you schedule regular vision checkups? Have your vision checked at least once a year.

Do you have your medication needs by your pharmacist or physician regularly reviewed? Some medications can cause side effects that may increase your risk of falling.

Are you eating a well-balanced diet and getting enough calcium and Vitamin D? You can increase your bone strength by ensuring adequate intake of vitamin D and calcium through diet and supplements.

Is your home safe and well-lit? Over half of falls occur in the home and low lighting or loose floor mats can be contributing factors.

Do you have grab bars in your bathroom? Grab bars in the tub or shower or next to the toilet can decrease your risk of falling.

Is your community safe? Do you know who to call if sidewalks or stairs in your community are uneven, or poorly lit? Paying attention to your surroundings helps everyone to be safe in your community.

Do you know how to get up safely after a fall? Go to the links below for tips on how to get up after a fall.

[Fall Prevention](#) (link)

[Medication Safety](#) (link)

[Nutrition and Healthy Bones](#) (link)

[Home Renovation Tax Credit](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)



Financial Planning

Planning for your financial future helps you to understand the choices you have to maximize your standard of living. Different sources of income may be available, including public and private pensions, investments and employment; you may also be eligible for discounts and provincial and federal tax credits. Financial security, however, also requires planning for the unexpected.

Protecting yourself against financial abuse is also a part of financial planning. Financial abuse or exploitation can happen to anyone, and may involve pressure to gain access to your money, tricking you into changing your will or other legal documents, fraud, scams or identity theft. It may involve a family member, a friend, or a complete stranger.

Questions to think about to keep your finances safe while planning for the future:

Do you know where your income will come from, how much it will be and how long it will last as you become older?

Do you know how much money you will need to maintain your desired standard of living?

Do you have an emergency fund for unexpected expenses?

Are you aware of all the benefits for which you may be eligible?

Do you have the right kind of, and enough, insurance?

Do you know with whom you can consult regarding your financial and legal questions?

Have you considered appointing a trusted person to make financial decisions on your behalf if you become incapable of doing so? The webpage on financial and legal matters (see link below) can help you assess what types of tools to use and how to plan.

Do you know about the many discounts for which you are eligible as a senior in British Columbia?

Do you know who to contact if you suspect that someone is misusing your money or assets, or their powers under a legal document that pertains to your finances?

[Financial Planning](#) (link)

[Financial and Legal Matters](#) (link)

[Income Security Programs](#) (link)

[Protection from Elder Abuse and Neglect](#) (link)

[Substitute Decision-Making](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Health and Safety



Planning to stay healthy

Health and safety are key components of an independent and active lifestyle for seniors. Being healthy is critical to staying independent. Living a healthy lifestyle will promote good health and can help prevent injuries, but it's also important to be pro-active about maintaining your health.

Questions to consider when planning for your good health:

Do you keep a health journal making note of physical and emotional changes to your health and well-being? You can track how you are feeling, when you first noticed symptoms, list questions you want to ask your physician and write down answers, test results, prescriptions and how the prescribed medication is affecting you.

Do you schedule regular dental and medical check-ups? The purpose of scheduling regular appointments is to discover potential health problems before they require serious medical care.

Do you prepare for your medical appointments (e.g. take along a list of questions)?

Do you have your medication needs regularly reviewed by your pharmacist or physician?

Have you had your vision and hearing checked lately? Vision loss will affect your ability to drive safely and hearing loss could be affecting your relationships.

How often do you have general medical screening (e.g. bone density, colorectal or prostate cancer) tests? Preventive screenings may identify potential health problems before they develop or worsen. Initiate the discussion with your family doctor if you have cause for concern.

Have you considered planning to remain active and engaged by reducing behaviours that can negatively affect your health? As you age, your body has more difficulty processing alcohol and drinking too much alcohol can make some health problems worse.

Did you know that the body starts healing itself almost immediately after you quit smoking? Within days of quitting, breathing becomes easier and taste and smell improve.

[Health and Safety](#) (link)

[Health Care Programs and Services](#) (link)

[Work Closely With Your Doctor](#) (link)

[Alcohol and Aging](#) (link)

[Seniors and Tobacco](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)



Health Care Programs and Services

The vision for health care in B.C. is to have a sustainable health system that supports people to stay healthy, and when they are sick, provides high-quality publicly funded health care services that meet their needs.

The provincial government provides tools to help you manage your health care needs and participate in shaping British Columbia's health care system.

Questions to consider when planning for your health care:

Is your family doctor's phone number handy?

Do you know how to access healthcare when you need it? For an emergency, dial 9-1-1. For health related questions, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

Did you know that you can call HealthLink BC any time? A trained health service representative will answer all 8-1-1 telephone calls, and you can ask to speak to a registered nurse, pharmacist or dietitian for further information and advice.

Have you heard of the Seniors Health Care Support Line? It is available to provide seniors and their families with support for health-care-related issues that they may have had trouble resolving. Call toll-free: 1-877-952-3181 from Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Do you need support in managing your chronic health condition? People with chronic health conditions and family members can participate in self-management programs offered in communities throughout B.C. at no cost.

Have you considered using your experience as a patient to help shape health care in B.C.? If you are a patient, family member or caregiver, use your experiences for positive change in the health care system by joining the Patient Voices Network.

Do you want to join the discussion on health care in British Columbia? You can connect via an interactive forum called ThinkHealthBC.

[Health Care Programs and Services](#) (link)

[HealthLinkBC](#) (link)

[Seniors Health Care Support Line](#) (link)

[Self-Management Programs](#) (link)

[Patient Voices Network](#) (link)

[ThinkHealthBC](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Healthy Eating



Eating well as you get older can help your body stay strong and your mind sharp, and it can actually help slow the aging process. A nutritious, balanced diet can also reduce your risk for health problems like high blood pressure, heart and respiratory disease, and some forms of cancer.

Questions to think about when planning to eat healthy, nutritious foods:

Do you know that by eating foods with more nutrients like vegetables and fruit and avoiding too many foods high in calories, you can maintain and even improve your health? For healthy eating, try to limit fried or deep-fried food and ready-made, processed and refined foods.

Do you know how to modify your recipes to make the food you eat healthier? You can choose steaming over frying and cook with more whole grains such as brown rice, oats and barley.

Did you know that you need fewer calories and more nutrients as you get older?

Do you know where to get fresh, healthy, wholesome food in your community?

Have you considered kitchen, or patio gardening (if you don't have a back yard) so that you can add fresh herbs and greens to your food?

Do you need to make changes to the way you eat? Eating too much food high in sodium and processed fats can harm your health.

[Healthy Eating](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Housing



Whether you own or rent your home, think about how your housing needs may change as you age. Consider if your home and its location are suitable for you to remain independent and age in place. “Aging in place” means staying in your own home and community as you get older. To do so, you may need to make changes to your home, or you might want to consider downsizing, or moving to a location closer to shops and/or transportation services.

Questions to think about when planning for your future housing needs:

Can your current home be adapted to suit your future needs? It’s important to assess whether your home will allow you to age in place, or if you will need to invest in significant home modifications, such as putting in a new bathroom, or widening halls and doorways.

Did you know that you can apply for a Seniors' Home Renovation Tax Credit? This is a refundable personal income tax credit to assist individuals aged 65 and over with the cost of certain permanent home renovations.

How will you maintain your home if you need help?

Is your home too big?

How accessible and safe is your home for independent living? Think about potential tripping hazards, lots of steps, or how close your nearest neighbour is.

Would it be best to downsize now? Often this decision is left until an emergency forces the older adult out of the home. In this situation, s/he no longer has the luxury of time to sort through belongings, or find the best available accommodation.

What services are available in your community to help you with daily activities such as shopping, housework, yard work or snow shoveling?

What are the housing options for seniors in your community?

Are you within walking distance to shops, services and the community supports you need?
Many older adults outlive their driving ability by seven to 10 years.

How age-friendly is your community? Consider if your community will serve your needs as you age.

[Housing](#) (link)

[BC Seniors' Home Renovation Tax Credit](#) (link)

[Home and Community Care](#) (link)

[Better at Home](#) (link)

[Age-friendly BC](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Leaving a Legacy



As people get older, they increasingly express a desire to leave a legacy of meaning and purpose to future generations. There is a sense of wanting to give back and to create something of lasting value.

Your legacy may be a tree you planted, the volunteer hours you contributed, a foundation you started, art you created, or a story you wrote. Your legacy could be the values and skills you passed on to future generations with your teaching or parenting, or stories or gifts you've shared.

Questions to consider regarding your legacy:

How would you like to be remembered?

What are your deepest values and what matters to you?

How do you want to make your community (or the world) a better place?

What have you always wanted to do?

Is there a painting, book or song waiting inside of you ready to be shared with others?

Would you like to make a gift to support a charitable work that you value?

Would you like to be remembered for your volunteer work?

How will your actions influence others?

What do you want to contribute to the world?

[Leaving a Legacy](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Lifelong Learning and Creativity



Engaging in lifelong learning and creative self expression is beneficial to your health and well-being. Learning something new supports brain health, enhances mental alertness and is an important part of healthy aging. Being creative has also been linked to improved mental health. In fact, some experts claim that creative self expression is key to staying healthy, engaged, vibrant and balanced.

Questions to consider when exploring lifelong learning and creativity:

What talents have you always wanted to explore?

Have you considered singing, painting, learning a new language, joining a choir, acting, or learning to play an instrument?

What are your natural strengths and abilities?

Are you still challenging yourself and learning?

How do you like to be creative?

Do you know what classes are offered at your local community recreation centre, community school, college or university?

Have you thought about teaching a class or mentoring?

[Lifelong Learning and Creativity](#) (link)

[Education and Lifelong Learning](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Mental Health



Practicing a healthy, active lifestyle that includes physical activity, healthy eating, and social connections can help maintain good mental health as you age. It can also help prevent chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and obesity, which are risk factors for dementia. In addition, life-long learning, being creative, having a spiritual practice or understanding, and spending time in nature can also help support mental health and well-being.

Questions to consider regarding your mental health and wellness:

How do you deal with stress? How you handle stress has an impact on your health.

Did you know that negative self talk can increase stress? Your mind and body are powerful allies. How you think can affect how you feel. And how you feel can affect your thinking.

Do you get enough sleep?

What are you doing for fun?

Do you have opportunities to spend quality time with friends and family? Building positive relationships with people can help foster resilience. Resilience is an "inner strength" that helps you bounce back after stressful situations. When you are resilient, you may recover more quickly from setbacks or difficult changes, including illness.

Have you thought about new skills to learn that can help you manage stress?

Do you make an effort to go out and enjoy nature? Evidence suggests that being in nature can promote mental and physical health and well-being.

Is substance use affecting your quality of life? Do you know what services and programs are available to you? B.C. Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information at “Here to Help” offers reliable information about mental health, substance-use and addiction problems.

[Mental Health and Illness](#) (link)

[HealthLink BC: Mind-Body Wellness](#) (link)

[Here to Help](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Physical Activity



Being physically active is one of the best ways to maintain your health and independence. Getting enough exercise and engaging in an active lifestyle will promote positive mental health and well-being, help you manage stress, ensure that you can maintain your balance, flexibility and mobility, and help to prevent illness and disability. Older adults are a population at higher risk for inactivity. Plan to build regular physical activity into your life to promote healthy aging.

Questions to think about when planning for increased physical and mental health:

How are you planning to stay physically active? Aim to get at least 10 minutes of exercise, three times a day.

Have you thought about trying a new activity such as gentle yoga, Tai Chi, Nordic walking, swimming or riding a bike? Physical activity promotes balance and flexibility and is vital to preventing falls.

Did you know that you can increase your muscle mass at any age with weight bearing activities?

How much physical activity do you get? Have you thought about keeping a fitness journal to list your daily activities, set goals, track your progress and identify activities that you like doing best?

Did you know that sitting for too long can harm your health and can increase your risk of heart attack, stroke and developing diabetes? If you are sitting a lot, it's recommended that you get up every 20 minutes to walk around and stretch.

Did you know that low intensity, low-cost activities such as moderate, regular walking are among the simplest and most popular ways to be physically active? Walking yields significant health benefits such as lowering body fat and blood pressure (in hypertensive individuals) and improving insulin sensitivity.

[Physical Activity](#) (link)

[HealthyFamiliesBC](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Protection from Elder Abuse and Neglect



Every day in British Columbia, thousands of older adults are subjected to some form of physical, emotional, financial or sexual abuse, and/or experience neglect. Yet too often, elder abuse goes unrecognized. The abuser and the abused may not even recognize the actions as abuse.

Elder abuse can take place in a senior's home, a care facility and in the community, and most often involves a person in a position of trust or a situation of dependency. Some common examples include intimidation, humiliation, physical assault, sexual assault, frauds, scams, misuse of a power of attorney, over-medicating or withholding needed medication, restricting cultural or spiritual practices, censoring mail, and denying access to visitors.

Elder abuse is a serious issue that undermines the independence, dignity, health, and sense of security of the victim. It is a violation of the basic human rights of seniors and in many instances it may involve a criminal offence. Each of us has a role to play to prevent elder abuse.

Questions to think about to help protect yourself or someone you know from elder abuse or neglect:

Do you know how to recognize signs of abuse or neglect? Can you name eight different kinds of abuse and neglect?

Do you know who to contact if you or someone you know is being abused or neglected? Do you know what services are available in your community so that you can access help when you need it?

Do you stay in touch with your friends, family and neighbours?

Have you prepared a will, power of attorney, advance directive and representation agreement to help deal with your financial and personal matters in case you cannot at some time in the future?

Have you created a safety or emergency plan so that you have some options if you feel, or suspect, you are being abused?

Are there indications that an older adult you know is being abused or neglected and do you know what to do in such a situation?

[Protection from Elder Abuse and Neglect](#) (link)

[Together to Reduce Elder Abuse – B.C.'s Strategy](#) (link)

[Financial Planning and Protection Brochures](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Safety at Home



It's important to feel safe in your community and in your home. Accidents and injuries often occur in the home, but many of them are preventable and can be avoided by removing scatter rugs that you could slip on or trip over, installing grab-bars in the bathroom, adding brighter lighting, or arranging your storage shelves so that everything is within easy reach. Safety in the home also includes keeping your medication up to date and having an emergency kit and plan in case of a disaster. Make sure you have a lamp, flashlight and telephone within reach of your bed.

Questions to think about when planning to stay safe in your home:

Is there adequate lighting throughout your home? Falls can occur in areas with low lighting.

Do you keep a flashlight within reach of your bed?

Does your home have an operational smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector, and fire extinguisher?

Do you have an escape route, or meeting place planned, in the event of an emergency?

Are emergency phone numbers posted near a telephone in your home?

Do you have an emergency / earthquake kit with water, gloves, medication, first aid, prescription glasses, flashlight and non-perishable food?

Is your home well ventilated? A poorly ventilated home can cause poor indoor air quality. Lack of proper ventilation may occur in tightly sealed buildings.

Is there a block watch in your area?

If you live alone, do you keep in regular contact with a friend / family member to let them know how you are doing?

[Safety at Home](#) (link)

[Ventilation](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Transportation



Mobility outside the home supports independence and choice, but many rely on a car to get around – to maintain social connections, participate in various activities, shop or go to appointments. If driving is your main mode of transportation, planning for healthy aging includes thinking about your transportation needs when you can no longer safely operate a vehicle. Most people outlive their ability to drive safely by seven to 10 years, so it is important to identify and practice using other transportation options before you need to give up your licence.

Questions to think about when planning for your transportation options:

Might taking a taxi from time to time be more affordable than owning a car, if you don't need to drive every day? The Canadian Automobile Association's 2012 book on [Driving Costs](#) gives national averages and approximate figures to help you determine how much it costs to operate a vehicle.

Do you have an alternative to driving such as walking, or riding a bike? Do you feel safe and comfortable doing so?

Do you live within walking distance to shops, services and other supports you need?

Do you keep a list of phone numbers handy for people who can assist you in getting to appointments, buying groceries, or visiting friends?

Do you know how to access public transportation in your community?

Do you have a list of transportation options (listed by type, availability and accessibility) to use/contact in case of an emergency?

[Transportation](#) (link)

[Driving Costs](#) (CAA Publication)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)

Volunteering



Volunteers offer their time and skills for many reasons – to help out with events or causes they feel passionate about, to share their knowledge and experience, and to stay active and engaged in their communities. Volunteering offers numerous opportunities to expand and grow, to learn, to meet new people, to be creative, to feel valued, to make a difference and to help shape the community you live in.

Volunteers report having increased levels of satisfaction and self-esteem, and overall better physical and emotional health, than non-volunteers.

Questions to think about when planning to volunteer:

What do you love to do?

Which skills would you like to share?

What would you like to learn?

How much time can you commit to community or volunteer work?

Do you want to share your skills locally or internationally?

Which organization would you like to work with?

What are the issues in your community that you feel passionate about?

Are you interested in getting involved to make your community more age-friendly?

[Volunteering](#) (link)

[Community Engagement and Connection](#) (link)

[Social Connections](#) (link)

[Age-friendly BC](#) (link)

[Planning for Healthy Aging](#) (link)