

Being Prepared in the Time of COVID-19: Three Things You Can Do Now

This is a challenging time. There are many things that are out of our control. But there are some things we can do to help us be prepared — both for ourselves and the people we care about. Here are three important things each of us can do, right now, to be prepared.

1 Pick a person to be your health care decision maker.

Choose a health care decision maker (also known as a [health care proxy](#)) — a person who can make medical decisions for you if you become too sick to make them for yourself.

- Here's a [simple guide to help you choose a health care decision maker](#).

Talk with your health care proxy to make sure he or she knows what matters most to you.

- Make a plan to talk with your decision maker as soon as possible. Phone calls or video chats are good if you don't live with that person.

Fill out a [health care proxy form](#) naming your health-care decision maker. Give one copy of the form to your decision maker and one to your Dana-Farber care team.

- In a time of social distancing, you may not be able to complete an official legal document (where witnesses are needed). That's okay! Writing it down is still better than nothing!

2 Talk about what matters most to you.

Talk with your important people and your health care proxy about what matters most.

- The [Conversation Starter Kit](#) can help you get ready to talk to others about what matters most.
- If you have already completed the Conversation Starter Kit or have a signed [health care proxy form](#), review it with your loved ones to see if you want to make any changes or updates.

After you talk to your loved ones about what matters, talk to your Dana-Farber care team.

- Call your Dana-Farber care team to set up a virtual visit to talk about this. Knowing what matters to you helps your care team provide better care that's right for you.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

First and foremost, **do everything you can to stay personally safe and protect others!**

Follow the CDC recommendations for social distancing: Stay home. Wash your hands often with soap and water. Avoid close contact. Cover coughs and sneezes.

Most people who get COVID-19 get a mild or moderate illness and don't need to go to the hospital.

Those who do get a severe case of COVID-19 are mostly people who are older or have other medical problems.

Some people, especially those who are young and healthy, will get better with routine hospital care. But many, especially those who are older and sicker, will not — even with aggressive medical intervention.

People who do not want intensive care will receive comfort care. Comfort care may be possible at home, in a hospital, or in a nursing facility, especially with the care and support of hospice.

Many hospitals are not allowing visitors, so if you choose to come to a hospital, bring your smartphone, laptop, or tablet (and charger) to help you communicate with your important people.

3 Think about what you would want if you became seriously ill with COVID-19.

People who are older or have cancer are more likely to become very sick if they get COVID-19. Some will recover with hospital care but, even with aggressive interventions, others will not. Think about what you would want if you became very sick at this time. Consider the following.

What would be most important to you? (Examples: Being comfortable. Trying all possible treatments.)

What are you most worried about? (Examples: Being alone. Being in pain. Being a burden.)

What is helping you through this difficult time? (Examples: My friends. My faith. My cat.)

If you became very sick with COVID-19, would you prefer to stay where you live or go to the hospital?

If you chose to go to the hospital, would you want to receive intensive care in the hospital?

When you speak with your health care provider, ask if completing a [MOLST form](#) would be appropriate so others know what treatments to use or avoid if you become very sick.

List any other questions or concerns you want to bring up with your friend/family/provider:

[Dana-Farber's Health Care Proxy Form](#)

To name your own health care proxy, you'll need to fill out and sign a health care proxy form, which is a simple legal document that allows you to name someone you trust as your health care proxy. Find this online at www.dana-farber.org/healthcareproxy.