

LPA OPG advice - Life Sustaining Treatment

'Life-sustaining treatment' means care, surgery, medicine or other help from doctors that's needed to keep someone alive.

You can state in your health and welfare LPA what you'd want to happen if you needed life-sustaining treatment and you no longer had mental capacity.

You have 2 options:

- Option A. Yes. I want to give my attorneys authority to give or refuse consent to life-sustaining treatment on my behalf. If you choose this option, your attorneys can speak to doctors as if they were you.
- Option B. No. I do not give my attorneys authority to give or refuse consent to life-sustaining treatment on my behalf. If you choose this option, it means doctors will make the decisions about life-sustaining treatment instead of your attorneys.

After you print out your LPA document, you'll have to sign and date the option you've chosen. This must be witnessed.

See [Attorneys](#) for information on choosing your attorneys.

Life-sustaining treatment: definition

Life-sustaining treatment can include:

- a serious operation, such as heart bypass surgery
- chemotherapy, radiotherapy or another cancer treatment
- an organ transplant
- artificial nutrition or hydration (food or water given other than by mouth)

Whether some treatments are life-sustaining depends on the situation. For example, if someone had pneumonia, a simple course of antibiotics could be life-sustaining.

Decisions about life-sustaining treatment can be needed in unexpected circumstances. One example is a routine operation where things don't go as planned.

Option A: attorneys

Choose option A if you want your attorneys to decide about life-sustaining treatment if ever you need it and can't make the decisions yourself.

At the end of the LPA service there is a section where you can add instructions and preferences for your attorneys. If you have specific wishes about life-sustaining treatment, make them clear in that section, so that any decisions your attorneys make are as close as possible to the decisions you would have made.

You can specify medical or physical conditions where your attorneys must or must not consent to life-sustaining treatment on your behalf. For example, you can state

that your attorneys must not agree to life-sustaining treatment if you are in a persistent vegetative state.

If you have already made an 'advance decision' to refuse a specific life-sustaining treatment, your LPA will override the advance decision if you give your attorneys the power to decide about life-sustaining treatment.

An advance decision is a legally binding document in which you state which life-sustaining treatments you don't want, in case you cannot decide at some point.

See [Instructions and preferences](#) for more on giving guidance to your attorneys.

Option B: doctors

Choose option B if you want your doctors to decide about life-sustaining treatment if you can't. If the situation arises, they must:

- carry out an assessment of your best interests
- take into account, where possible, the views of your attorneys and other people involved in your welfare
- take into account what you have said or written about life-sustaining treatment, including any guidance you've given in your LPA

Making your treatment preferences known

If you've made an advance decision to refuse treatment that your attorneys or doctors must take into account, you can refer to it when adding 'extra instructions' under the 'instructions and preferences' section of this LPA service.

[NHS Choices has information about advance decisions.](#)

You can also let people know your views on treatments and care in:

- statements of preference
- care plans.

There's more about life-sustaining treatment, advance decisions and how health professionals must respond to your written wishes in chapter 9 of the [Mental Capacity Act 2005 Code of Practice](#)