

Honouring wishes

You and your family have rights related to your care and culture.

It's your right to

- Choose traditional and/or western approaches to care.
- Ask questions.
- Say how much information you want about your illness and treatment.
- Choose who will be involved in your care decisions.
- Receive a specific treatment or not.
- Decide what you want your healthcare providers to know about you.

Treatment decisions

- Think about what is important to you.
- Prepare and ask questions.
- Take someone with you to appointments.
- Ask how your illness will progress.
- Ask what treatment is being offered and why.
 - To cure the disease?
 - To extend life?
 - To deal with symptoms?
 - What about side effects?
- Share your beliefs and traditions with healthcare providers so they understand your wishes.
- Tell them about traditional medicines you are using in case they might interact with western medicines.
- Choose a substitute decision maker(s). Who will make decisions for you when you can no longer make decisions for yourself.
- Ask for a circle to discuss your feelings and wishes, ask questions, make decisions, and set up schedules for visits/care and support. The circle may be for family but may also include healthcare providers. Create a space at home or ask for a hospital room where people can gather.



“Within our culture we tend to be very respectful when we’re in the doctor’s office. We don’t ask a lot of questions or feel we have the right to ask.”

Dr. Amy Montour

Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario

Care in your community

- Ask family and healthcare providers what supports can be provided. Family members can learn to provide basic care and take shifts.
- Ask about phone supports or Telehealth.

Care away from home

- Ask about liaisons who can relate to family and culture.
- Ask how healthcare providers and facilities can help with traditional and complementary care:
 - Ceremonies, smudging, music, songs, prayers, dance, sacred items
 - Sharing circles, stories, family gatherings, nature, traditional foods
 - Elder, healer, priest
 - Reflexology, Reiki, etc.
- Ask healthcare providers to tell your family what you want during your illness and when you have passed. (For example, pain medication, someone to stay overnight, flowers, certain music, pallbearers, help distributing personal belongings.)

Helpful resource

“I Have Been Asked to Be a Substitute Decision Maker” – Lakehead University has an excellent resource – <https://cerah.lakeheadu.ca>



HOPE BY LISA PERRAS

“Working hand in hand is so important, the physical and the spirit helping, easing the mind, the emotion, and resurrecting the mental state.”

Elder Eugene Harry
Cowichan Tribes, British Columbia

To see the Indigenous Voices video series and to learn more about living with serious illness and grief, go to LivingMyCulture.ca

Also available:

- What is palliative care?
- Compassionate caring
- Care at home and away
- Helping you feel better
- What to expect
- Honouring wishes
- Making memories
- Grief and letting go

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