I’d like to talk to you about decisions you might have to make in the future if you become very sick. I’ll show you some examples of medical care to help you understand your options for the kind of medical care you can have in the hospital.

Then I would like to ask you about what kinds of treatments you would want if you were hospitalized. Keep in mind, in these situations you may or may not be able to tell your doctors what you want. Knowing what you want now and telling others in advance may help make things easier in the future for both you and your family.

You might find it difficult to discuss this, but as it turns out, different people have different ideas about what is best for them. If we talk about your choices ahead of time, you can let your doctors know now what you would like if you become very sick.

People sometimes change their minds about these decisions, and that is normal. But it’s a good idea to start thinking now about what you would want if you become very sick. Here is one way to help you start thinking about your choices.

Basically, there are three general approaches to medical care if you become very sick. They are: Life-Prolonging Care, Limited Medical Care, and Comfort Care. Let’s review these three general approaches together.
The first approach is **Life-Prolonging Care**.

With this approach, the main goal is to prolong life. This means that your doctors would do everything they could to keep you alive. They would perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation or CPR. CPR tries to get your heart to beat again if it stops. This involves pressing on your chest and using an electric shock in an attempt to restart your heart.

Frequently, CPR does not work.

Most of the time in patients with an **advanced disease**, CPR does not work.

If you choose this approach, you would also agree to have a ventilator or breathing machine if you need it to breath. This involves putting a tube down your throat into your lungs and connecting you to a machine that pushes air into your lungs.

You cannot eat or talk while on this machine.

While on a breathing machine, you will likely need very strong medicines. These medicines are usually given in the intensive care unit or ICU.

Life-prolonging procedures may or may not restore you to your previous health. With the Life-prolonging approach, you choose to have these procedures in exchange for the possibility of a longer life.
The second choice is **Limited Medical Care**.

With this approach, prolonging life is still important, but not if it means having CPR or being placed on a breathing machine. People who choose Limited Medical Care would like medicines for treatable problems that may arise such as fluid in the lungs or a urine infection. This approach lets you have different medical treatments including hospital care, antibiotics, other medicines, and fluids through a vein.

People who choose Limited Medical Care do not want procedures such as CPR or breathing machines. They would choose to avoid these procedures even if without them they would die.
The third choice is **Comfort Care**.

The main goal of this approach is to maximize comfort and relieve your symptoms. Treatments are only used if they help control uncomfortable symptoms such as pain, trouble breathing, or feeling sick to your stomach.

The main goal is not to prolong life, it is to maximize your comfort. People who choose this approach are usually treated at home, in hospice, or sometimes, in a nursing home.

Comfort Care does not include CPR and breathing machines, and usually would not include hospitalization unless it is needed to provide comfort. People who choose Comfort Care choose to avoid these procedures even though, without them, they would die. The goal of this approach is to maximize comfort and relieve symptoms.
I hope this has helped you understand the different choices you and your health care team might make in the future. Choosing among the three approaches: Life-Prolonging Care, Limited Medical Care, and Comfort Care, is one way your doctors will make sure that you receive the type of medical care you want if you become very sick.

I strongly encourage you to talk to your doctor and your family about your preferences. If you let your doctor, family, and friends know your choices, they can help carry out and protect your rights and wishes if you become very sick.