



EOL¹

Why plan ahead?

It is important to plan ahead so that you can put your mind at ease, and say those important goodbyes. By planning ahead you will also make the financial, legal and practical consequences of illness and death much easier for your family to deal with.

Here's a checklist of things that you might like to consider, whether you are facing the end of life now, or you want to plan for your future end of life care.

Here is a checklist of seven important things to think about:

1. Consider Legal and Financial matters
2. Register a Living will
3. Organise a Power of Attorney
4. Arrange for Organ Donation
5. Decide about End of Life Care
6. Make Funeral Arrangement Plans
7. How Would You Like to be Remembered?
8. Other Things to Bear in Mind

¹ EOL stands for End of Life and includes all the instructions that you may want included in any plans for your final months as well as after your passing.

1. Consider Legal and Financial Matters

Don't leave chaos behind for others to clear up. This can cause disputes and arguments between family members.

So make a will (*testamento*) as soon as possible, taking legal advice if necessary.

It is important for you to make a Will whether or not you consider you have many possessions or much money. If you die without a will, there are certain rules which dictate how the money, property or possessions should be allocated. This may not be the way that you would have wished your money and possessions to be distributed.

You can find more information on succession laws and Spanish wills here

<https://www.angloinfo.com/how-to/spain/money/pensions-wills/spanish-wills>

2. Register a Living Will

A living will (*voluntades anticipadas*) enables you to tell doctors and health care workers about the type of medical treatment you would want when faced with a serious illness or unexpected accident and you are not able to speak for yourself. Anyone of sound mind and 18 or over can make a living will. In the Balears you can register your Living Will with the *Registro De Voluntades Anticipadas* to ensure that your medical team can access it.

In the living will you can state your wishes, for example do you wish to be resuscitated or to receive life-prolonging treatment?²

In a living will you can also express basic instructions on what you would like to happen after your passing, such as do you want to be cremated or buried, religious or non religious service, organ donation etc.

You can find out more about how to fill in and register a living will here:

<https://www.cancersupportmallorca.com/articles/144-living-will>

² There are times when a doctor and the medical team see these treatments are no longer working, in which case they may decide to withdraw or stop them anyway.

3. Organise a Power of Attorney (Poder Notarial)

Organising this is essential as it means nominating a next of kin (a relative, close friend or solicitor) to take care of your personal finances, property and other assets should you become too ill to do so yourself.

A power of attorney is a legal document which allows anyone of legal age to appoint one or more people to act on their behalf as proxy decision makers in the event of loss of mental capacity.

In Spain there are various different types of power of attorney, allowing the person designated to act on behalf of the individual in different areas, such as legal, financial, etc.

A power of attorney will always need to be signed before a notary to have any effect, it is worth arranging a meeting with your preferred notary who can assess you on the best kind of power of attorney for your needs. The fee is normally about €50.

A notary will only formalise a power of attorney if the individual shows full mental abilities and is able to sign for themselves, therefore this is not something that should be left until the last minute. If a person has their full mental abilities and can express their free will but is physically unable to sign the document, the notary may be willing to sign it with witnesses who are willing to vouch that the individual is of sound mind and that this is his express will.

For a power of attorney to be internationally recognised it must be apostilled, in which case it will be recognised by any country that is governed by The Hague Convention.

4. Organ Donation

You can donate any organ or tissue you choose, including your brain, to help save the lives of others or for medical research and teaching.

While organ donation is addressed in your living will you can also register for a donor card, you can carry this with you in digital or physical format to express your desire, however the card has no legal value and your relatives can override it as they are the ones who have to sign the authorisation from, so it is imperative that you inform your family if you want to be a donor so they can respect your wishes.

You can request your donor card here <http://www.eresperfectoparaotros.com/>

5. End of Life Care

5.a. Choosing Where To Die

When making a plan for what you want when you die, it is important to consider the kind of care you would like towards the end of your life.

This includes where you would like to die, whether you have any particular worries that you would like to discuss, and whether you wish to continue with any life-prolonging treatment. It is important to do this earlier rather than later just in case you are unable to make decisions for yourself in the future.

The places people are most likely to choose to die are:

- Hospices
- Care homes
- Hospitals
- At Home

Hospices

Mallorca does not have dedicated hospices as in the UK or other countries, but there are certain hospitals that have wards dedicated to palliative care, your medical team would be the ones to refer you to one of these centres when they see you are no longer able to manage at home.

The range of care may include:

- Pain and symptom control
- Psychological and social support
- Palliative rehabilitation – helping patients to stay independent and continue to live their lives as they have done before
- Support in bereavement.

The centres in Mallorca offering palliative care include Hospital General, San Juan de Dios (Inca and Palma), Juan March and Manacor Hospital, Son Espases has a paediatric palliative care unit for oncological patients.

DIME is a Palliative care charity here in Mallorca and they have volunteers in most of these centres.

Care homes

Care (or nursing) homes cater for long-term elderly residents who are no longer able to cope on their own. Care home staff usually encourage regular visits from relatives and, supported by the GP, are happy to consult relatives on continuing treatment and care of the elderly person, especially when their health is failing. They do not usually provide rooms for relatives to stay overnight, but are normally happy for you to spend as much time as possible with the person who is dying.

There are a number of public care homes on the island, but waiting lists are long and you may not always be given a place in one close to your family. There are also plenty of private care homes that can be somewhat easier to get into, but obviously this comes at a price.

Whether in a private or public care home, it is likely that if your health deteriorates you will be transferred to a hospital with a palliative care ward.

Hospital

More than half of us die in hospitals, they are often the best place for this especially if you require specialised nursing care and pain relief. If you cannot or do not want to be taken home, you will normally be allowed visitors who can stay at your bedside as long as you wish. If you are taken into one of the main hospitals (Son Espases, Son Llatzer, Manacor or Inca), they may transfer you to one of the other clinics with a dedicated palliative care unit.

Note About Private Clinics

There are no private hospices on the island, but if you are receiving treatment in a private clinic, your insurance will often cover palliative care within the hospital itself, if not, they will normally arrange for you to be transferred back into the social system so you can be moved to a clinic with a palliative care unit.

At home

Many people prefer to die at home where they feel comfortable and safe, if you prefer this option you can request the aid of ESAD, a team who can offer the medical support and pain relief you need during your final days, weeks or months.

The request for ESAD assistance has to be made through your oncologist or GP and your local medical centre will coordinate this. It is therefore important to make sure you are registered with the medical centre in your local area, as it can cause problems otherwise.

ESAD services include:

- Visits to the patient's home and contact by phone periodically.
- Assessment, monitoring, treatment and control of health situations that alter the patient's well-being.

- Psychological support that allows you to adapt to the disease with the highest quality of life possible.
- Deployment of all available resources so that the patient can live at home during the disease process.
- Advice and education, both for the patient and to the family and the caregiver, offering welfare-oriented care.
- Case management to avoid the patient having to travel to a hospital to receive health care, which avoids unnecessary waiting.
- All patients' notes will be lodged with the 061 (emergency medical services) and ESAD so in case of an emergency they have all the information to hand.

At any time the patient or family are worried they can call ESAD and they will either explain what to do or they will come over – normal waiting time can be up to two hours.

You can find more information about ESAD here:

<https://www.ibsalut.es/apmallorca/ca/ap-mallorca/unitats-suport/esad>

While many of us may want to die at home, this is not always possible. For instance, the house may not be suitable, the person who would be the primary carer may be elderly or infirm and other relatives may be unable to offer appropriate care. Your GP and other health professionals will help you select the right place to receive the best care under the circumstances.

5.b. Dying - Advice for relatives

Procedure For next of Kin or Appointed Friend

If you have already contacted and spoken with funeral Directors in advance you can call them immediately and they will contact the necessary Services involved.

If not follow the procedure below:³

*In the event of a death at home telephone 112 or 061 and explain there has been an **expected** death.*

³ Please note that this is standard procedure, but may vary depending on the place and time of death as well as the officials involved. When possible it is always best to plan in advance and make an arrangement with a funeral director, there are some on the island who have English speaking assistants, they will then handle everything and advise you where needed.

If it is within normal working hours a doctor from your local PAC will come around and sign the Death Certificate.

Once the Certificate is signed the funeral Directors can proceed.

If it is out of hours the doctor on call will confirm the death but will not be able to write a Death Certificate, the GP will be informed, they will then come during surgery hours and issue the Death Certificate.

The next of kin will have to show a copy of Passport and NIE to the Funeral Directors to prove they have the authority to make any decisions.

6. Plan Your Funeral Arrangements:

Have you thought about whether you would prefer to be buried or cremated?

Perhaps you would like an eco-friendly funeral rather than a more traditional one.

Think about what kind of service you would like, and whether you want it to be more of a celebration of your life than a conventional ceremony.

What hymns, readings or music would you like to have, and who would you like to be there? Write this down and give it to someone whom you trust, or put it in your will.⁴

Some things to decide on:

Burial or cremation

In case of cremation, what do you want to happen to your ashes?

Would you like an eulogy? Who would you like to write this?

Any particular prayers, poems or other readings? Do you want flowers or donations to charity?

⁴ While a living will contains basic instructions for this, if you want a more detailed plan you will need to make your own and leave it with a trusted friend or relative.

7. Consider How You Would Like To Be remembered

What would you like people to know before you die?

Are there any messages you would like to leave for those you love?

Perhaps you would like to create a "memory box" or a video for your loved ones.

The time to do this is while you are still able.

8. Other things to remember

There are many other things that we need to let our loved ones know, making it easier for them and ensuring your wishes are met.

It is recommended for you to have a record of all these things and to let your loved ones know where they can find this, this record can be in paper or digital. Cancer Support Mallorca and Age Concern have put together the booklet "....." that can help you with this.

Whatever way you decide to record this information, remember to include things such as:

- Family details
- Medical details
- People you want to be informed of your passing (friends, colleagues, business partners, clients, etc).
- Funeral arrangements and guests
- Dependents
- Pets
- Where to find important documents
- Banking details
- Personal loans
- Business details
- Personal property
- Insurance
- Things to pay, cancel, close (utilities, benefits, memberships, subscriptions, etc)
- Logins for emails accounts, websites and social media