

Decision Guides For End of Life Planning

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)



WHAT IS CPR? (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation)

- CPR attempts to restart the heart and breathing
- A group of treatments used when someone's heart and/or breathing ceases – mouth-to-mouth breathing or putting a tube in the mouth or down the airway to provide air, pressing on the chest to circulate the blood, electric shock and/or drugs to stimulate the heart

DOES CPR WORK?



On TV shows, CPR is shown as an easy life-saving action that is successful 67% of the time. CPR is also more successful if the person is already in the hospital, where healthcare workers can give care quickly. Studies shows about 18% of adults who receive CPR survive to leave the hospital.

The success rate is extremely low for people who are at the end of a terminal disease process. Critically ill patients who receive CPR have a small chance of recovering, less than 3%. Patients over 90, almost never survive a CPR attempt.

People have different reasons for not wanting CPR. For someone old and frail or seriously ill, CPR might work only partially, leaving the person breathing but brain-dead, with a heartbeat but needing artificial breathing, or in some other vegetative condition. Many people would rather let nature take its course than wind up in such a state.

Also, many people nearing the end of life have simply had enough of battling with their deteriorating condition, and they're willing to let go of life when their body tells them it's time.

COMPLICATIONS OF CPR:

- Need for a breathing tube to be placed in your windpipe and placed on a ventilator which will assist you to breath. Usually requires a stay in the ICU as part of the hospital stay.
- When chest compressions are done, you could suffer broken ribs that can lead to discomfort and prolonged recovery
- Sometimes people lose mental abilities or may not regain their previous qualities of life.