

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) decisions

This leaflet explains what cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is for and how decisions are made about it. This leaflet may be useful to your relatives, friends and carers. If you have any questions, please talk to one of the health professionals caring for you.

What is CPR?

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is an emergency treatment given to try and restart the heart and breathing.

Basic life support (CPR) involves:

- Inflating the lungs by mouth-to-mouth breathing or through a mask over the nose and mouth.
- Repeatedly pushing down firmly on the chest.

Advanced life support (CPR) involves:

- Inflating the lungs through a tube inserted into the windpipe.
- Using electric shocks and drugs to try and restart the heart.

Healthcare colleagues at Birmingham Hospice are trained to provide basic life support. There is an automatic defibrillator available, but we cannot provide sustained advanced resuscitation here at the hospice. If resuscitation is attempted an emergency ambulance will

be called and a transfer to hospital for advanced life support will be arranged.

What do I need to consider?

It is most appropriate to provide CPR when the cause of a cardiopulmonary arrest is potentially reversible or treatable and so there is a chance of success.

For people who are frail or have medical conditions such as cancer, lung disease or heart failure, their bodies are already weakened, and the chance of successful CPR and subsequent full recovery is much less likely.

Side effects should be considered, e.g. bruised or fractured ribs, and the need for artificial ventilation in an intensive care unit within a hospital.

Even after a successful resuscitation, it takes many months, sometimes years, to fully recover after a cardiac arrest - some people unfortunately never fully recover and can be left with a serious disability.

The focus of our care is always on trying to achieve the best possible quality of life and ensuring that when death comes, it is as peaceful, dignified and gentle as possible.

Decisions about CPR

It is a medical decision whether to offer CPR, but we will endeavour to involve you and your loved ones if you wish.

Please let us know if you have strong feelings about resuscitation, or if you want the team to make the decision without talking to you about it.

The team looking after you will consider the medical issues, including whether CPR is likely to be able to restart your heart and breathing. This is not dependent on your age or any factors except your current state of health.

If the team looking after you think that CPR would not be successful, they will talk to you about your illness, what you can expect to happen and what can be done to help and support you.

Advance care planning

Many people like to plan for a time when they are not able to talk about their choices and decisions about their health. This may be an informal discussion with their loved ones or healthcare team, or a more formal process.

This information can be documented in many ways and part of this may be a Do Not Attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation order (DNACPR).

A RESPECT form may also be completed by your team. This will clearly document your wishes around care and treatments. DNACPR is often addressed as part of this process. It can be completed as part of an inpatient admission or within the community. The form should stay with you and can be reviewed at any time.

You can still receive other treatments that will benefit you, such as antibiotics for a chest infection or radiotherapy to alleviate pain. You will also be able to have pain relief and other medications at the end of life if needed.

A more formal advance decision to refuse treatment (ADRT) can be completed. It is not possible to demand a certain treatment, but patients can make clear wishes to refuse something they feel is not of benefit to them. This should be put in writing, signed and witnessed. Your healthcare team can help you with this.

Sharing your wishes with your loved ones and healthcare team is very important and as much information as possible should be added to your medical notes.

