



## Deciding About Resuscitation

### What is Resuscitation?

Resuscitation refers to the methods used to try to restart the heart and lungs if they stop working. If you have a serious illness, talk with your doctor and your loved ones about resuscitation and other treatments you may need in the future. Your doctor can tell you more about resuscitation and answer your questions.

### What Is Involved in Resuscitation?

Resuscitation can involve:

- **CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).** This is used to try to restart your heart if it stops beating. It involves pressing down on your chest and forcing air into your mouth.
- **Intubation.** This is used if you can't breathe. A tube is placed through your mouth or nose, down your throat, and into your windpipe. The tube may be attached to a breathing machine. The machine helps pump air through the tube and into your lungs.
- **Electric shocks.** This is used to send brief shocks to your heart through small pads on your chest. It may help restore your heart rhythm to normal.
- **Medications.** These may be used to help restart your heart.

### What Is the Likely Outcome of Resuscitation?

Resuscitation can save lives. Factors such as age, health, and underlying illness can affect the outcome. Also how quickly resuscitation is started can affect the outcome. Even if a patient is revived, complications can occur during resuscitation that may cause further health problems or disability.

### How Do I Decide If I Want Resuscitation?

As you make your decision, here are some things to think about or ask your doctor:

- Will my illness improve? Will it get worse? How likely is a cure?
- What are the risks and benefits of resuscitation for me?
- Am I likely to survive or recover fully from resuscitation?
- How might the outcome affect my health?
- How might it affect my comfort and quality of life?
- Consider your own values or faith. Also, ask for advice from those who share your values.



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### How Do I State My Decision About Resuscitation?

Your doctor and other healthcare providers will perform resuscitation when needed unless you have a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order. A DNR order tells healthcare providers not to perform resuscitation if your heart and lungs stop working. If you do not want resuscitation, talk to your doctor about a DNR order. Laws about DNR orders vary from state to state. Ask your doctor about what forms are needed to make sure your wishes will be followed. Here are some common features of DNR orders:

- A DNR order must be written and signed by a doctor. This only can be done with your consent. If you can't speak for yourself, your health care agent may give consent. This is a person named by you to make treatment decisions on your behalf when you can't. A legal form called a Health Care Power of Attorney is needed to appoint this person. If you don't have a health care agent, the doctor may ask a family member or close friend to decide on a DNR order.
- A DNR order can be canceled at any time. Any changes must be discussed with your doctor. Make it a practice to review your decision for a DNR order each time there is a change in your health or goals of care. Also, be sure to tell your health care agent and loved ones of any changes in your decision.
- A DNR order does not affect whether you will receive other treatments. A DNR order does not mean "do not treat." You will still receive all other treatments for pain and other symptoms as needed.

### Deciding About Resuscitation for a Loved One

Ideally, the decision about resuscitation is made with the patient's consent. In some cases, the decision may fall to the patient's loved ones. If you are trying to decide about resuscitation for a loved one, start by talking to loved ones and his or her doctor. Discuss the goals of care and the benefits and burdens of the treatment on your loved one's health. Think about your loved one's wishes and values. Also, seek advice from other healthcare team members, such as a social worker or spiritual advisor, if needed.

Source of information – Krames on Demand