

# Easy read: cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) information

## Information for patients

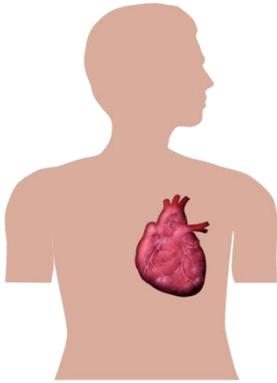
This leaflet answers common questions about decisions around cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). It has been written in an easy-to-read format to help clinicians talk about do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) orders with people with learning disabilities and/or their carers. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.

In all cases, a clinician will explain the decision to you and/or your carer and answer any questions you may have.

### **Making decisions about CPR**

Decisions about CPR are taken by your doctor, but they should be discussed with you and your family, carers or legal power of attorney for health and welfare, so you understand how they have reached this decision.

## What is cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)?



If your heart stops beating you will die, unless you have CPR to get your heart beating normally again.



The person providing first aid will need to push down hard on your chest. This is CPR.

You will need a mask to help you breathe.



Sometimes an electric shock may be needed to try to restart your heart.

## When is CPR used?



If you are usually well and your heart stops beating, the doctors will use CPR to try and start your heart again.

They will only do this if they will think you have a good chance of recovering after having CPR.

You need to be fit and healthy to recover after CPR.

## DNACPR



If you are very poorly and your heart stops the doctors may decide not to do CPR.

This may be because your body is too sick, and CPR won't make your heart start beating again. Or it might be because you have already told them you don't want them to do CPR.



It is important you understand a do not attempt CPR (DNACPR) order ONLY means you will not receive CPR if you stop breathing or your heart stops beating.

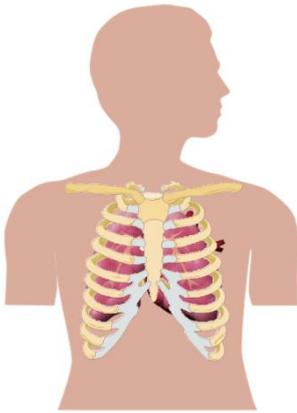
All other treatment can continue, and the doctors should discuss this with you.

## Does CPR always work?



CPR does not always work and so the person may end up very poorly and then die.

## Can CPR be harmful?



You can get bruises on your chest.

Your ribs can get broken.

Your lungs can get damaged.



Some people get damage to their brain because their heart stopped beating.

This can make it difficult for them to do things like walk, talk and eat.

**Can I decide in advance that I **don't** want CPR if my heart or breathing stops?**



Yes, you can talk to the doctor looking after you and tell them if you do not want to have CPR.



You can also write this down on a form called an “advance statement of wishes”.

You will need to tell your friends and family about this and put a copy in your health records.

## Can I decide in advance that I **do** want CPR if my heart or breathing stops?



The doctor must make this decision, because they understand what the risks may be. The doctor should speak to you to find out what you think about CPR.



If you don't agree with the doctor's decision you can always ask for a "second opinion". This means another doctor will tell you what they think about the decision.

**If I make a decision about CPR can I change my mind later?**



Yes, you should talk to your doctor about this. They may ask you to write down your decision.

**Do I have to make a decision about whether or not I want CPR in the future?**



No, you don't need to talk about this at all. The doctor will make a decision at the time if needed.

## What if I can't decide for myself?



If you can't make the decision, doctors will talk to your family, and carers about what is in your best interests.

Please tell the doctors if there is anyone in particular you would like them to talk to.

## If I or my doctor decide I shouldn't have CPR will this mean they won't give me any treatment if I'm ill?



No. The decision about CPR is different to decisions about treatment to make you better.

## Who else can I talk to about this?



You can talk to other people about this to help you decide what you want.

There are advocacy groups and counsellors you can talk to.

The Resuscitation Council UK website also has lots of information.

## Contact us

If you are a Royal Free London clinician working with people with learning disabilities and you feel their situation would benefit from support from a learning disability nurse, please contact the acute liaison nurses team:

- **Barnet Hospital and Chase Farm Hospital:** 020 8216 4600
- **Royal Free Hospital:** 020 7794 0500 extension 35917

## Acknowledgement

The information in this leaflet is based on Resuscitation Council guidelines for patients, with simplified language and images to aid understanding. It has been produced with help from people with learning disabilities and has been adapted from resources produced by Hertfordshire community learning disability service and adult care services.

## More information

For more information about the acute medicine service at the Royal Free London, please visit our website:

[www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/acute-medicine](http://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/acute-medicine)

## Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: [rf.communications@nhs.net](mailto:rf.communications@nhs.net)

## Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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