

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation: information for patients and carers

Decisions about resuscitation

This leaflet explains:

- what cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is
- how decisions about CPR are made
- how you will know whether CPR is relevant to you.

This leaflet is purely about CPR and not other treatments.

It is a general leaflet for all patients, but it may also be useful for your relatives, friends and carers. This leaflet may not answer all your questions about CPR but it should help you to think about the issue. If you have any questions, please talk to one of the healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses and others) caring for you.

What is CPR?

Cardiopulmonary arrest means that a person's heart and breathing have stopped. When this happens, it is sometimes possible to re-start their heart and breathing with emergency treatment called CPR. This might include:

- repeated pushing down very firmly on the chest
- using electric shocks to try and correct the rhythm of the heart
- inflating the lungs with a mask or tube inserted into the windpipe.

Decisions about CPR are legally and clinically the responsibility of your healthcare team.

Is CPR tried on everybody whose heart and breathing stops?

If there is a chance that CPR will work and the person has not refused, the healthcare team will try to revive the patient.

A person's heart and breathing can also stop working as part of the natural and expected process of dying. If people are already very seriously ill and near the end of life, restarting their heart and breathing may do more harm than good by prolonging the pain or suffering of a terminal illness.

Does it matter how old I am or that I have a disability?

No, what is important is the state of your health. Your age alone does not affect the decision, nor does the fact that you have a disability.



If it is decided that CPR won't be attempted, what then?

At The Christie your healthcare team will ensure that you receive the best possible care. Your consultant or a senior member of your medical team will make sure that you know and understand that the decision has been made. If you want, your close family and friends can be involved in these discussions.

There will be a note in your health records stating that you are not for cardiopulmonary resuscitation. This is called an 'Allow a natural death' order. You will continue to receive all the other treatment that you need.

Am I likely to have a cardiopulmonary arrest?

People respond differently to illness. Only your healthcare team can advise you on the likelihood of this happening to you.

What is the chance of CPR reviving me if I have a cardiopulmonary arrest?

The chance of CPR reviving you will depend on why your heart and breathing have stopped and any illnesses or medical problems you have or have had in the past.

Only about 2 out of 10 patients in the general population survive long enough to leave hospital following CPR. The figures are much lower for patients with serious underlying conditions such as cancer. It is important to remember that this only gives a general picture and is not representative of what you can personally expect.

Do people get back to normal after CPR?

Unfortunately, many attempts at CPR do not restart the heart and breathing despite the best efforts of everyone concerned. A few patients make a full recovery; some recover but have health problems. Patients who are revived are often still very unwell and need more treatment usually in a coronary care or intensive care unit. Some patients never get back to the level of physical or mental health that they enjoyed before the cardiopulmonary arrest. Some have brain damage or go into a coma.

Will I be asked whether I want CPR?

You and your healthcare team will decide whether CPR should be attempted if you have a cardiopulmonary arrest. The healthcare team will look at all the medical issues, including whether CPR is likely to be able to restart your heart and breathing if they stop. It is beneficial to attempt resuscitation if it may prolong your life in a way that you can enjoy. Sometimes, however, starting a person's heart and breathing leaves them with a severe disability or prolongs suffering. Prolonging life in these circumstances is not always beneficial. Your wishes are very important in deciding whether resuscitation may benefit you, and the healthcare team will want to know what you think.

What if I don't want to discuss resuscitation?

You don't have to talk about CPR if you don't want to, or you can put the discussion off if you feel you are being asked to discuss too much too quickly. Your family, close friends and carers might be able to help you. The healthcare team will decide, taking account of your wishes. If you are under 18 your parents can decide for you.

I know that I don't want anyone to try to resuscitate me. How can I make sure they don't?

If you don't want CPR, you can refuse it and the healthcare team must follow your wishes. You can make an advance decision, to put your wishes into writing. If you have an advance decision declaration, you must make sure that the healthcare team knows about it and puts a copy of it in your records. You should also let people close to you know so they can tell the healthcare team what you want if they are asked. There is a Christie leaflet 'Advance decision to refuse treatment: do your family know your wishes for your care?' (CHR/397) which contains information about advance decision.

What if I change my mind about an advance decision?

You can change your mind at any time. Please talk to any of the healthcare team caring for you.

What if I am unable to decide for myself?

Your family and friends are not allowed to decide for you, but it can be helpful for the healthcare team to talk to them about your wishes. If there are people you do (or do not) want to be asked about your care, you should let the healthcare team know.

Adults can choose somebody to make decisions for them if later they lose the ability to make decisions for themselves. A 'proxy' who has been granted the lasting power of attorney can make decisions for you. If you have not formally chosen a proxy, your healthcare team will make a decision about what is best for you.

What if I want CPR to be attempted, but the healthcare professionals in charge of my care say it won't work?

No healthcare professional would refuse your wish for CPR if there was a real possibility of it working successfully and helping to bring you back to good health. If there is doubt whether CPR might work for you, the healthcare team will arrange a second medical opinion if you would like one.

In most cases, healthcare professionals and their patients agree about treatment where there has been good communication.

What if my situation changes?

The healthcare team will review the decisions about CPR regularly and especially if your wishes or condition change.

Who else can I talk to about this?

Your healthcare professional will be happy to discuss any worries or concerns you may have. However, if you need further support, the following services may be of help:

- The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) **0161 446 8217**
- Chair of the resuscitation and deteriorating patient committee
Dr Pawel Arkuszynski pawel.arkuszynski@christie.nhs.uk
- Vice chair of the resuscitation and deteriorating patient committee
Jude McLellan jude.mclellan@christie.nhs.uk
- Resuscitation Council of UK www.resus.org.uk

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

