



CPR General Fact Sheet

CPR is a procedure health providers can use to try to start a person's heart if it stops beating. CPR stands for **C**ardio-**P**ulmonary **R**esuscitation.

Here is what happens with CPR:



1. The provider may need to push very hard on a person's chest.



2. The provider may need to use a machine that gives an electric shock to the heart.



3. The provider may need to put a tube down the person's throat to help them breathe.

Potential Benefits: CPR helps some people.

If a person's heart stops and no CPR is given that person will die. CPR is an attempt to keep a person alive, but it often does not work. In fact, for people who are in the hospital the success rate for CPR is 15%. In other words, if 100 people are given CPR, 15 of them would live and 85 would not survive. If a person's heart stops when they are older or very sick, the chance of living after CPR goes down a lot. For example, for people with cancer or kidney disease that has gotten bad, only 5% would be alive after getting CPR. In other words, in 100 people, 95 would die, and 5 would survive.

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Potential Risks: CPR can lead to other problems.

It is important to know that people who are alive after CPR usually have health problems

Some examples of health problems after CPR include:

Broken ribs – Pushing on a person’s chest in CPR often breaks some ribs.

Brain injury – It is common after CPR to have memory loss, speech problems, or to have parts of the body that cannot move. This is called paralysis. Many people do not recover from this kind of brain injury.

Loss of independence – Most people with a serious illness who survive CPR can no longer take care of themselves.



Would you want CPR if your heart stops beating?

There is a lot to think about before saying yes or no to CPR.

No to CPR

Most people who say no to CPR feel it is more important to be healthy and independent than to live as long as possible. They want to avoid being kept alive artificially even if it means that they might miss a chance to live longer.

Yes to CPR

Most people who say yes to CPR feel it is important to live as long as they can. They are willing to take a chance to live longer even if it means that would likely die or survive with broken ribs and brain injury.

Many people think about how their choice will affect their friends and family.

Do you worry about this? Have you talked with them? Talking with your friends, family, and your healthcare team about your wishes is very important. Talking about your wishes will help protect your rights and values.



Information About This Patient Decision Aid

This CPR fact sheet was developed by Angelo Volandes MD, MPH, a physician and researcher at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Volandes is a recognized world wide as an expert on educating patients about their choices for CPR. Dr. Volandes was not paid by any outside groups to develop this fact sheet. He does not make money from choices people make about getting CPR.

Studies About CPR Success Rates and Problems

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