



# **Questions about attempting CPR**

(Cardiopulmonary resuscitation)

Information for patients and relatives

Registered charity number: 511619

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## **The purpose of this leaflet**

The medical and nursing team looking after you realise it is often difficult for you to discuss sensitive subjects such as CPR with us. We hope this leaflet will help you understand what is involved in CPR, and make it easier for you to ask questions.

## **What is CPR?**

CPR stands for **cardiopulmonary resuscitation**. This is a treatment that is sometimes used if the heart and lungs stop working because of a sudden event (e.g. a big heart attack). It involves one person pressing down repeatedly on the chest, and another blowing air into the lungs (usually through a mask over the mouth). Unfortunately the treatment is not as simple or successful as is often suggested by television medical dramas. It is an aggressive and traumatic form of treatment.

## **What are the facts about CPR?**

### **Benefits**

- For somebody with a short-term health problem CPR may keep someone's heart and lungs working artificially until the short-term problem is fixed. Although CPR is an aggressive traumatic treatment, the benefits in those circumstances may well outweigh the trauma caused.

### **Burdens**

- If someone in the hospice were very ill but comfortable, CPR would disturb what could otherwise be a peaceful and dignified end to life.
- The side effects of CPR can include:
  - severe bruising of the chest
  - fractured ribs
  - brain damage
  - reduced quality of life as a result of the above

### **Chances of Success**

- In people with advanced, progressive diseases, CPR has an extremely low chance of success. For example, in incurable cancer, less than 1% of people recover, even if CPR occurs in hospital.
- The hospice does not have equipment needed for supporting people during and after resuscitation.
- Patients who might benefit from CPR would have to be transported to hospital for treatment, once basic life support was started at the hospice.

## Decision Making

This is always decided on an individual basis for each patient. As with any treatment, the team of health care professionals (i.e. doctors, nurses, social worker etc) will carefully consider the potential benefits and burdens for individual patients.

If we feel that CPR may be successful we would assume that you would want us to try and resuscitate you, even if we had not discussed this with you. But you can choose not to be resuscitated and we would respect your wishes. If the likely outcome of CPR is not certain we may wish to discuss this with you to help us in the decision-making.

For some patients, when their illness is advanced, eventually their heart and lungs will stop working as part of the natural process of dying. We would not attempt CPR in this situation but allow the patient to die peacefully.

In those cases we do all we can to allow a natural death, which is dignified and comfortable.

Some patients want to be involved in the decision and others do not. We often ask people about their wishes regarding future care, which provides an opportunity to talk about CPR. However, if you indicate that you do not wish to talk about a particular aspect of your care, we will not force you to do so. If you prefer, you can ask us to talk to you with your family present, or to talk to your family instead of you.

If you do not want to be resuscitated, or if there are any other treatments you do not want, please let us know – we do not want to put you through treatments that you don't want.

Regardless of whether or not we offer you CPR, please be assured that every treatment is considered on its own merits. Even if we cannot offer you CPR, you will continue to receive all appropriate treatments. Our focus of care will remain, as always in the hospice, your quality of life.

**If you have any questions about this, or any other aspect of your care, please let any member of the team know. Even if that person cannot answer your questions, they will try to find someone else who can.**

***This leaflet concerns patients. In the event that volunteers or visitors experience a cardiopulmonary arrest while at the Hospice, staff will call 999 for paramedic support and commence basic life support.***