

CPR or No CPR:

What you should know



If your heartbeat or breathing stops, CPR may or may not be effective.

This fact sheet can help you decide if you want CPR when your heart or lungs stop working. The time to choose is when you feel well and have the facts you need. Ask questions and talk with your doctor and others. Think about what living means to you.

CPR has side effects you should know about before you choose. Age and health make a difference. The doctor who knows you best can help you make your decisions.

What is CPR?

CPR is done for you by someone else. It can include:

- Breathing into your mouth and pressing on your chest
- Electrical shock and drugs to try to start your heart
- A tube placed down your throat to help you breathe

Is CPR effective?

CPR may not help as much as most of us think.

CPR works best if:

- You are healthy with no other medical problems
- It must be given to you within a few minutes of when your heart or lungs stop working

CPR generally is not successful in returning to your previous health state if:

- You have chronic health problems
- You have an illness that can no longer be treated
- You are older and weak

Facts to know

If you are in the hospital and get CPR, you have a 22 percent chance of it working and leaving the hospital alive.

If you are older, weak, and living in a nursing home, CPR works less than 3 percent of the time.



What else can happen with CPR?

If CPR does not help to get your heart and lungs to work, it usually has unwanted outcomes:



- Your lungs are weakened and you will need to be on a breathing machine for an indefinite length of time
- You will need to be cared for in the ICU
- You may have brain damage leaving you permanently unconscious
- You may have damage to your ribs

You should talk to your doctor about his/her recommendations related to your specific health condition.

If you want to try CPR:

If you want to try CPR, you should talk about what results you would expect. What are your goals going to be? What would make you no longer want to be alive? Some examples are:

- You could not breathe without a machine
- You could not think or talk
- You would not know anyone

If you decide you do not want CPR:

If you do not want to try CPR, you will still get the care you need. There are many choices you can make to help you be comfortable and live as well as possible.

If you do not want to try CPR, you need to tell your doctor and family. Plans can be made that follow your wishes.



A community-wide project of the Greater Flint Health Coalition.

www.yourhealthyourchoice.org