Advance Care Planning: Do I Want Life Support?

Your choices

- You can have life-support treatment. Life support means any treatment to keep you alive. CPR is one type of life-support treatment. Being on a breathing machine called a ventilator is another type.
- You can decide not to have life-support treatment.
- You can choose to have life-support treatment only for a limited time or within certain limits. Many people and their families find that it is best to specify a point at which the treatment should stop.

Key points in making your decision

- If you have a terminal illness and other long-term health problems, you may feel that life support will only prolong your life and will not let you die naturally. Life support may not add to your quality of life. Or you may feel that you need to take every measure possible to stay alive.
- You may not want to have CPR or be on a ventilator. Or, you may want these treatments if there is a chance they might prolong your life so you can meet certain goals.
- CPR doesn't always work to resuscitate people, or "bring them back." And the older and sicker you are, the less likely it is to work.
- Whether you choose life support or not, your doctor will take steps to help you feel comfortable.

Think about the facts and about what matters most to you. To help with your decision, take this information to your doctor and talk with him or her about your thoughts and feelings. Ask for more information if needed.
### Reasons to have life support

- In a few cases, life support may help you return to your normal activities.
- You need life support because of an emergency that is not related to your illness.
- Your quality of life is good and you have a sudden event that requires life support. You could recover well from the event.

### Reasons not to have life support

- You have other long-term health problems that make it less likely that you will benefit from life support.
- Life support will not help you return to your normal activities or to a level of activity you would like to have.
- You want a calm, peaceful death, and you do not want to spend the rest of your life on a ventilator.

### Circle the answers that best apply to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have a terminal illness, and I want life support to extend my life.</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want a calm, peaceful death, and I do not want to spend the rest of my life on a ventilator.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life support may extend my life and allow me to meet certain goals.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The risks of life support outweigh the benefits.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I am on a ventilator and cannot breathe on my own again, I am willing to live the rest of my life on a ventilator.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have other health problems that may impact whether I choose life-support treatment.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learn the facts. Consider the risks and benefits. Ask about costs. Talk to your doctor. Talk to your loved ones.