

Effects of Resuscitation on Elderly

Resuscitation refers to restarting a person's breathing and blood circulation when breathing and/or the heart stops. An elderly person might stop breathing or his heart may stop because of health issues like a heart attack. At the point the heart stops beating resuscitation is very important because when the heart stops beating, the person will lose consciousness and in a few minutes brain cells will not be receiving oxygen and will die.

So, what can be the effects of resuscitation on the elderly? Do elders benefit from resuscitation?

If the elder person's brain cells have lacked oxygen for many minutes, the effects of resuscitation on that elder person could have long term effects. This is because if the elder person is revived, the person will suffer from some degree of brain damage depending on how long it took to resuscitate him.

The effects of resuscitation on anyone will vary from one person to the next. This is because it depends on the state of the body's health and how soon resuscitation may have some effect. However, if the body is frail, the elderly person might suffer from another heart attack, stroke or cardiac arrest. The person may not return to the state of health they had prior to the heart or breathing stopping.

Sometimes an electric 'shock' may be given externally to stimulate the muscle of the heart to start beating. This may cause burns on the elder person's chest. Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) when given may fracture the ribs or breastbone (sternum) due to pressure given with chest compressions. There is great difficulty in predicting outcome of CPR on anyone.

The decision to resuscitate or do not resuscitate (DNR) is very individual. Talk with the attending physician about your questions and concerns.

Compiled from source: www.babyboomercaretaker.com



We thank Kansas Health Ethics, Inc. (now closed) for their efforts in the development of this and other documents. For more information about obtaining copies of this document contact

Wichita Medical Research & Education Foundation
316-686-7172

or

tcarter@wichitamedicalresearch.org

www.wichitamedicalresearch.org

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**Wichita Medical Research &
Education Foundation**
3306 E. Central
Wichita, KS 67208
316-686-7172

Document #230 (10/11)
Understanding Do Not Resuscitate

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What is Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation?

What Does Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) mean?

What is a Do Not Resuscitate Directive?

What is a Do Not Resuscitate Order?

Who can ask the doctor to write a DNR Order?

What may be the circumstances for a DNR to be considered?



What is Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation?

Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is a group of procedures that may include:

- Forcing oxygen into the lungs by mouth-to-mouth breathing or by mechanical means.
- Medically assisted respiration and intubation to support or restore breathing (ventilator)
- Chest compressions or the use of electrical stimulation (“the paddles”)
- Administration of medications

What Does Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) mean?

DNR means that if your heart stops beating or if you stop breathing, no medical procedure to restart breathing or heart functioning will be started.

This DNR decision will NOT prevent you from receiving other medical care by health-care workers.

You can revoke/cancel this DNR at any time. Have a conversation with your doctor regarding DNR if your health status changes.



Despite what you see on TV, CPR has a small chance of working for people who are seriously ill or dying.

What is a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Directive?

A DNR Directive is a form signed by the patient that directs that no CPR is desired.

In Kansas, this DNR Directive must be signed by the patient and a physician.

This DNR Directive will stop resuscitation from happening if the DNR Directive is visible to Emergency personnel.

What is a Do Not Resuscitate Order?

A DNR order is a physician’s written order that instructs other healthcare workers not to do resuscitation, also called “no code.”

If this order is not written, it is assumed that CPR is wanted, no matter what the condition of the patient.

A DNR order is used when the patient is already in a hospital or a nursing home. A DNR order can be written on a prescription pad for home use.

Even if you have a DNR directive, some hospitals and nursing homes require a DNR order to be written by your doctor each time you are admitted.

Who can ask the doctor to write a DNR Order?

- The patient
- Family member or healthcare agent, but these persons CANNOT sign the directive



If you have found someone without a pulse or not breathing, Call 911, then begin CPR unless otherwise indicated by a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) directive or DNR bracelet.

What may be the circumstances for a DNR to be considered?

- Terminal illness state
- Chronic disease
- Severe incapacity, mentally or physically
- Requested by patient
- Advanced age of patient
- Poor prognosis of health
- Poor quality of life before CPR
- Poor likelihood of success.

