

# Planning for Treatment Decisions at the End of Your Life

## *CPR, Breathing Machines, and Feeding Tubes*

### Overview

- **Will life-sustaining treatments improve my condition or prolong my life?**
  - The success of different treatments will depend on your health, age, and other factors. You should discuss treatment options with your healthcare provider(s) to see what may or may not be beneficial to you.
  - These treatments are usually most beneficial for healthier and younger individuals who only need them for an emergency or short recovery period. At the end of life, these treatments may work to prolong life but will not usually improve health conditions.
  
- **What if I do not want some or all of these treatments?**
  - Whether you do or do not want a certain treatment, be sure to discuss this with your healthcare provider(s) and family members.
  - There are plans and documentation that can be made to ensure your wishes are honored. If wishes are unknown by healthcare providers and family, treatments are usually given rather than withheld.
  - It is important to understand that you can still receive care to make you comfortable and relaxed.
  
- **What else should I consider when deciding whether or not to have these treatments?**
  - Quality of life – ask yourself what makes life worth living and how different treatment options may affect it.
  - Goals – consider what your goals are at the end of your life.
  - Discuss your wishes and goals with your healthcare provider(s) and family members.

## CPR

- **What is CPR? Why would I need it?**
  - CPR stands for Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation. It is administered when a person's heart stops beating or they stop breathing. CPR may involve another person compressing your chest, breathing into your mouth, or a machine sending an electrical shock to your heart.
- **What are the side effects and risks of CPR?**
  - CPR has the potential to save lives, but often comes with consequences. Broken ribs from chest compressions, brain damage from loss of oxygen, or other complications may arise (especially when you are older or sick).

## Ventilator (Breathing Machine)

- **What is a ventilator? Why would I need it?**
  - A ventilator is a machine that can help a person breathe by pushing air into their lungs through a tube inserted down the throat. A ventilator may be used to keep a person alive when the body cannot breathe on its own.
- **What are the side effects or risks of being on a ventilator?**
  - Using a ventilator may make it very difficult to move around due to being attached to a machine. Pain, discomfort, and difficulty speaking are common.
  - Ventilators used near the end of life may prolong life for a period of time, but rarely contribute to a full recovery or improvement in the condition.

## Feeding Tubes

- **What is a feeding tube? Why would I need it?**
  - A feeding tube is a tube that can deliver nutrients directly into your stomach if you cannot swallow food and/or water on your own. A tube may be inserted through the nose down to your stomach or through the skin into your stomach. This is often referred to as "artificial nutrition and hydration".
- **What are the side effects and risks of feeding tubes?**
  - Feeding tubes may cause discomfort, nausea, and infections.
  - It is important to understand that declining or removing artificial nutrition and hydration does not mean "starvation". Appetite loss is common at the end of life.