

## What is artificial nutrition and hydration?

Artificial nutrition and hydration are treatments that allow a person to receive nutrition (food) and hydration (fluid) when they are no longer able to take them by mouth.

This treatment can be given to a person who cannot eat or drink enough to sustain life. When someone with a life-limiting illness is no longer able to eat or drink, it usually means that the body is beginning to stop functioning as a result of illness.

Here is a list of the most common forms of artificial nutrition and hydration. There are possible risks from these types of treatments including infection, which you should discuss with your health care provider.

**Intravenous fluids (IV fluids):** a chemically balanced mix of nutrients and fluids given to a person using an intravenous catheter (a tube and needle that is placed into a vein in the body).

**Nasogastric tube (NG tube):** a flexible plastic tube placed directly through the nose into the stomach by way of the esophagus.

**Gastrostomy tube (PEG tube):** a small incision is made through the abdomen and a flexible plastic tube is placed into the stomach.

*Patient Information Pamphlet donated by*



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A close-up photograph of a cluster of bright pink hyacinth flowers. The flowers are small and bell-shaped, growing densely together on a single stem. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting foliage.

**End of Life  
Decisions:  
Patient Choices**

## What are life-sustaining treatments?

Life-sustaining treatments are specific medical procedures that support the body to keep a person alive when the body is not able to function on its own. Making the decision to have life-sustaining treatments or not can be difficult.

You might want to accept life-sustaining treatments if they will definitely help to restore normal functions and improve your condition. However, if you are faced with a serious life-limiting condition, you may not want to prolong your life with life-sustaining treatment, but instead you may want to focus on the quality of your life.

**The most common end-of-life medical decisions that you, family members or an appointed health care agent must make involve:**

- ✿ Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- ✿ Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR)
- ✿ Do Not Intubate Order (DNI)
- ✿ Artificial Nutrition & Hydration

## What is cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)?

CPR is a group of procedures used when your heart stops (cardiac arrest) or breathing stops (respiratory arrest). **For cardiac arrest**, the treatments may include chest compressions, electrical stimulation or the use of medication to support or restore the heart's ability to function. **For respiratory arrest**, the treatments may include insertion of a tube through your mouth or nose into the trachea (windpipe) to artificially support or restore your breathing function. The tube placed in your trachea (windpipe) is connected to a mechanical ventilator.

## Why should I decline CPR?

The success of CPR is extremely low in very ill persons. Cardiac arrest may occur in the final phase of a disease when the vital body functions are shutting down just before death. The natural dying process might be interrupted and prolonged with CPR, but the side effects of CPR may produce additional problems such as brain damage or dependency on a ventilator. That is why it is very important to think about this in advance of being in a situation where CPR might be performed as an automatic response to cardiac or respiratory arrest.

## What is a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order?

A DNR order is an order written by a health care provider that prevents the health care team from initiating CPR. The health care provider writes the order at the request of a patient or the appointed health care proxy. The DNR order must be signed by a health care provider to be honored.

### DNR ORDERS:

- ✿ Can be cancelled at any time by notifying the health care provider that you have changed your decision.
- ✿ May not be honored during surgery. This is something you should discuss with your surgeon and anesthesiologist before surgery so your wishes are honored.
- ✿ Should be posted in your home if that is where your care is being provided.

## What is a Do Not Intubate (DNI) Order?

In making decisions, your health care provider may ask you about being on a breathing machine. This is called a DNI order. When you request a DNR order, your health care provider may ask if you also wish to have a DNI order. Intubation is the placement of a tube into the nose or mouth and into your windpipe to help you breathe when you cannot breathe effectively on your own. If you are intubated, you will not be able to talk or eat food normally.