Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is a group of treatments used when someone’s heart and/or breathing cease. CPR attempts to restart the heart and breathing. It may consist of mouth-to-mouth breathing, pressing on the chest to circulate the blood, electric shock and/or drugs to stimulate the heart. When used quickly in response to a sudden event like a heart attack or drowning, CPR can be life saving. The success rate, however, is extremely low for people who are at the end of a terminal disease process. Critically ill patients who receive CPR have a small chance of recovering.

The Do Not Resuscitate Order documents that you do not want to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) efforts started if your heart and/or breathing stops.

Frequently Asked Questions About the New York State Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order

1. What is a DNR Order?
A DNR order is an order written by a physician at the request of the person or his/her family that instructs medical professionals not to perform CPR. This means doctors, nurses, and/or emergency medical personnel will not attempt emergency CPR if the individual’s breathing or heartbeat stops. A DNR Order requires the signature of a physician to be legally valid.

In New York State, to ensure that your wishes are honored at home or any place outside of a hospital, a completed, signed, and dated "Non hospital Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR Order)" is required. This Non hospital DNR Order must be visible and available in the event of an emergency. It is often kept near the phone, along with other emergency information.

2. Why are DNR orders issued?
CPR, when successful, restores heartbeat and breathing and allows an individual to resume his/her previous lifestyle. The success of CPR depends on the person’s overall medical condition. Age alone does not determine whether CPR will be successful, although illnesses and frailties that go along with age often make CPR less successful.

When people are seriously ill or terminally ill, CPR may not work or may only partially work, leaving the individual brain-damaged or in a worse medical state than before the heart stopped. In these cases, some individuals prefer to be cared for without efforts at resuscitation.

3. Can I request a DNR order?
Yes. All adults can request a DNR order. If you are sick and unable to tell your doctor that you want a DNR order written, your spokesperson, a family member or close friend can decide for you.

4. Is my right to request or receive other treatments affected by a DNR order?
No. A DNR order is only a decision about CPR and does not relate to any other treatment.

Questions About the NY State Non Hospital Do Not Resuscitate Order

1. How can I make my wishes about a Non Hospital DNR Order known?
An adult may consent to a Non hospital DNR order by informing a physician orally or in writing, such as in a Living Will, if two witnesses are present.

Before deciding about CPR, you should speak with your doctor about your overall health and the benefits and burdens of CPR. A full and early discussion between you and your doctor will assure that your wishes will be known.

2. If I request a DNR Order, must my doctor honor my wishes?
If you do not want CPR and request a DNR order, your doctor must follow your wishes or:
• transfer your care to another doctor who will follow your wishes; or
• begin a process to settle the dispute if you are in a hospital or nursing home.
If the dispute is not resolved within 72 hours, your doctor must enter the order or transfer you to
the care of another doctor.

3. If I am at home with a Non hospital DNR order, what happens if a family member or
friend panics and calls an ambulance to resuscitate me?
If you have a Non hospital DNR order and family members show it to emergency personnel, they
will not attempt to resuscitate you or transport you to a hospital emergency room for CPR.

4. What happens to my DNR order if I am transferred from a hospital or nursing home to
home care?
The order issued for you in a hospital or nursing home will not apply at home. You, your Health
Care Spokesperson (“Agent”) or a family member must specifically consent to a Non hospital
DNR order. If you leave a hospital or nursing home without a Non hospital DNR order, a doctor
can issue the DNR order for you while you are at home.

5. What happens if I change my mind after a DNR order has been written?
You or anyone who consents to a DNR order for you can remove the order by telling your doctor,
nurses, or others of the decision.

6. Who decides on a DNR Order for a child?
A DNR order can be written for a child with the consent of the child's parent or guardian. If the
child is old enough to understand and decide about CPR, the child's consent is also required for a
DNR order.