

Adult Day Caregiver Connection



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Understanding CPR and DNR: Which Is Right for You?

When it comes to making decisions about medical care, especially in life-threatening situations, terms like CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) and DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) can evoke strong emotions and raise important questions. Understanding what each entail is crucial to making informed choices that align with personal values and medical preferences.

What is CPR?

CPR is an emergency procedure performed when someone's heart stops beating, or they stop breathing. The goal of CPR is to restore circulation and maintain oxygenation of the brain and vital organs until advanced medical help can arrive. It involves chest compressions, rescue breaths, and, if available, the use of defibrillators. CPR can be lifesaving, especially for individuals who may have a chance of recovery with timely intervention.

What is DNR?

A DNR order, on the other hand, is a legal document that specifies that a person does not wish to receive CPR or other life-saving measures in the event of cardiac or respiratory arrest. This decision is often made based on personal beliefs, medical advice, or the desire to avoid prolonged suffering, particularly in terminal illnesses or advanced age. For many, a

DNR reflects a choice to prioritize quality of life over the potential trauma associated with resuscitation efforts.

Which Is Right for Your Loved One?

Determining whether to opt for CPR or seek a DNR order is deeply personal and should involve thorough discussions with family members and healthcare providers. Here are some considerations that might help guide your decision:

1. **Medical Condition:** Evaluate your loved one's current health situation. If they have a chronic illness or are in poor health, discussing a DNR order might be appropriate.
2. **Outcomes:** Consider the likely outcomes of CPR in their specific case. If the chances of a meaningful recovery are low, a DNR may align more closely with their wishes.
3. **Personal Values:** Reflect on their beliefs regarding life, death, and medical intervention. What does a good quality of life look like for them?
4. **Family Discussions:** Engage in conversations with your loved ones. Their perspectives may provide further insight into their preferences and how to communicate those preferences effectively with healthcare providers.

Ultimately, there is no 'right' answer universally; it depends on individual circumstances, beliefs, and values. Both CPR and DNR are rooted in the intent

to preserve dignity and autonomy during critical moments. It's essential to approach these decisions with care, compassion, and clarity to ensure your loved one's wishes are honored when they matter most. *Regularly revisiting these discussions, especially as health statuses change, can also reaffirm your/their choices and peace of mind.*

The Importance of Having a POLST

A Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form is a critical tool for individuals, enabling them to express their medical treatment preferences. As healthcare becomes increasingly complex, having a POLST is vital for several reasons:

1. **Clarity of Wishes:** A POLST provides clear guidance on an individual's wishes regarding life-sustaining treatments, such as resuscitation efforts and the use of feeding tubes. This is particularly important in emergency situations where decisions must be made quickly. A signed POLST offers clarity to healthcare providers about what actions should or should not be taken, reducing confusion and ensuring that an individual's desires are honored.

2. **Empowerment:** Having a POLST empowers individuals to take control of their healthcare decisions. By discussing their options with healthcare professionals and loved ones, individuals can articulate their personal values and preferences, ensuring that their voices are heard during critical moments. This can bring comfort to individuals and their families, knowing that care will align with their personal beliefs and wishes.

3. **Reduction of Unwanted Treatments:** Many individuals prefer to avoid aggressive treatments that may not improve their quality of life. A POLST can help prevent unwanted interventions by clearly documenting an individual's choices. This is especially relevant for those facing end-of-life issues, where aggressive measures may prolong

suffering instead of enhancing life. With a POLST, individuals can choose comfort care measures that focus on quality of life rather than invasive procedures.

4. **Facilitates Conversations:** The preparation of a POLST encourages important conversations between individuals, families, and healthcare providers. These discussions can address difficult topics, such as mortality and end-of-life care, allowing everyone involved to understand the patient's values and expectations. Such dialogue is essential for fostering trust and support within the care team and among family members.

5. **Legal Protection:** A POLST serves as a legally recognized document that oversees the implementation of an individual's healthcare preferences. In many jurisdictions, healthcare providers are required to respect the directives laid out in a POLST. This legal standing helps ensure that medical staff adhere to the individual's wishes, providing peace of mind to both individuals and their families.

In conclusion, having a POLST is paramount for individuals with serious illnesses. It not only clarifies wishes regarding medical treatment but also empowers patients, reduces unwanted interventions, facilitates meaningful conversations, and offers legal protection for their choices. Ultimately, a POLST represents a commitment to personalized care, making it an essential component of modern healthcare planning.