

Health and Wellness

Provided by Bethany Care Ministry Outreach Program partnering with Trinity Lutheran Church

What Is Resuscitation? ...and Do I Want It?

Have you heard of CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) orders? Do you know what the terms mean?

Advance Directives (Durable Power of Attorney and Living Will or Declaration to Physicians) were discussed in a previous article. Their purpose is to make sure your wishes about medical intervention, when you cannot speak for yourself, are honored. One big decision to discuss and plan for is, “**Do I want to be resuscitated?**”



CPR is a procedure used to try to revive someone when the heart and breathing stops. Originally developed to save healthy people who suffered severe trauma, (as in a combat setting) it was a real miracle, but now it is used even on people with terminal illnesses or serious medical conditions where CPR is not likely to be successful or even advised. Generally CPR should be started within about 6 minutes from the time the heart stops or severe damage can occur to the brain, kidneys, or other organs that may result in the person ending up alive but dependent on life support machines. For someone already in ill health the chances of a good outcome from CPR decrease considerably.

Because of this, many people have decided that they do not want CPR if their heart stops. But ambulance personnel found, at a time when every minute counts, it was hard to determine who would

have wanted resuscitation and who would not. So a law was passed in 1996 called Wisconsin Act 200. It says that a person outside a hospital setting who does not want to be resuscitated **MUST** have a bracelet on (like a hospital bracelet) that contains a signed MD order saying “do not resuscitate.”

So if you decide you don't want resuscitation if your heart stops, **you must get an order from your MD** and wear the “DNR bracelet” to insure your wishes are honored. If emergency personnel are called and there is no heartbeat and breathing they WILL start CPR unless the patient has a DNR bracelet on. **THE ONLY “DO NOT RESUSCITATE” DOCUMENT HONORED BY WISCONSIN EMERGENCY PERSONNEL IN THE COMMUNITY is the DNR bracelet.** It is a law that protects both the responders and the patient.

The emergency responders can do other procedures (clear airways, give oxygen, control bleeding, etc) if a person has the DNR bracelet on, just not CPR. For those who wish all measures be taken, they do not need the bracelet. Everyone should make their wishes known to trusted family and friends and their physician. The POA (Power of Attorney) for Healthcare is a good idea, even with a DNR bracelet. If you decide you do not want resuscitation talk to your MD about getting the DNR bracelet with signed orders. Medical bracelets that say “DNR” but do not have a signed order **are** not accepted by emergency responders in this state.

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Some of the information above was from the State Bar of Wisconsin, *A GIFT TO YOUR FAMILY.*