

# What is CPR?

## PEDIATRIC SERIES

CPR is an attempt to re-start the heart when someone has stopped breathing and the heart has stopped beating. CPR stands for cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

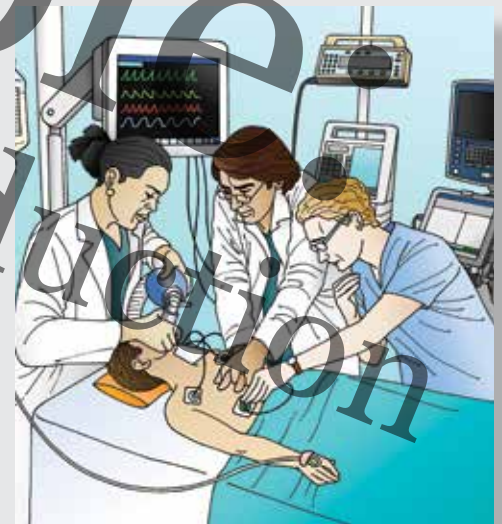
It can be very hard for parents and the healthcare team to decide if CPR is right for a child who is very ill or has a medical condition that cannot be cured and death is expected. Thinking about this decision before a medical crisis can be very helpful.

You may have seen CPR on TV. TV often makes CPR look quick, painless, and successful. But often it is not.

Here are answers to some questions about CPR that other parents have asked.

### What does CPR do?

- CPR tries to restart a child's heart and breathing when they stop.
- CPR helps to get blood and oxygen to the brain and other organs.
- CPR does not fix the medical problems that are causing the child to be so sick.



### What does CPR look like?

CPR includes:

- pushing very hard on the chest to press on the heart to circulate blood
- placing a mask and bag over the mouth to pump air into the lungs

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CPR may also include:

- a tube placed through the child's mouth, down the throat and into the windpipe (trachea)
- electrical shocks given to the chest to try to restart the heartbeat
- a tube placed in a vein to deliver medications

If CPR is successful, the child is often placed on a breathing machine. At this point, most children are not awake and cannot talk.

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### Does CPR work for children who are very sick or medically fragile?

How well CPR will work for each child depends on:

- the reason the heart and breathing stopped
- how sick the child was before the heart and breathing stopped

When a child's lungs and heart stop working, it is a sign that the child is very sick and is close to dying.

Children with a serious illness or medical condition who are getting sicker and whose organs are not working properly often die, even if CPR is done.

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### What medical problems could happen from CPR?

- When the chest is pushed on very hard, it can become bruised and ribs may be broken. Bleeding inside the chest is possible.
  - If the child is given an electric shock to the heart, burns on the skin and pain can occur.
  - If a breathing tube is placed into the windpipe, there could be harm to the lips, teeth, windpipe and vocal cords.
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- If the child is on a ventilator, lung infection and damage to the lung are possible.
  - If the brain did not get enough oxygen, the child may suffer long-lasting brain damage. If this happens, these children can have many problems that affect their quality of life. Some may never be able to breathe again without machines.
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### Why would someone not try CPR on a child?

- CPR does not fix the medical problems that caused the child's heart and lungs to fail.
- Parents and doctors may choose not to try CPR when a child's illness or medical condition has made their body very sick and he or she is near dying.
- They may not want the child to suffer the extra pain and risks of CPR if CPR is not likely to help the child live longer.



### Will a child still receive other life-prolonging treatments if he or she does not receive CPR?

Yes. The healthcare team will continue to provide all of the medical treatments that are helping a child, along with comfort measures.

If a child's heart or lungs were to stop working, his or her doctor would do everything possible to make sure the child would be comfortable and would have a peaceful death.

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## Where do we go from here?

Healthcare teams are here to help guide and support families to make the right decisions for their child.

Talk with your child's doctor and others on the healthcare team about your questions and wishes and their suggestions for your child's care. It's helpful for your medical team to learn about your personal, cultural and religious values.



You may also want to talk with others who understand and support your values, such as a spiritual leader or family members.

After a decision is made, the doctor can fill out forms to let the treatment teams know what is decided. No matter what decision is made, it can always be changed or modified at any time.

The healthcare team recognizes that these decisions are very difficult, but with their support, combined with the love parents have for their child, the right decision will be made.

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References, copies, and additional aids are available online at [CoalitionCCC.org](http://CoalitionCCC.org) or by email to [info@CoalitionCCC.org](mailto:info@CoalitionCCC.org).

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