



Information about CPR

Many health problems are so serious that they cause a person's heart to stop beating. This is called cardiac arrest. When this happens the person also stops breathing and no more oxygen and nutrients get to the brain, which causes the person to die.

Treatment

There is only one treatment for cardiac arrest and this is cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). CPR involves pushing on the chest and blowing air into the lungs.

Basic life support can be started at Te Hopai, but the resident will need to be transferred quickly to the public hospital.

Choices

CPR is a choice. Not everyone should have it. If a person chooses not to have CPR this will not affect any other aspect of the person's care.

A person will have to make a decision in advance about whether or not they want to have CPR. A person is not able to make that decision at the time. Making a decision in advance will ensure that a person's wishes are carried out. If a person chooses no, a DNAR order is made out. No-one else can make this decision for a person. Understanding the risks and benefits of CPR is important when you make your decision. The risks and benefits are laid out below.

Benefits of CPR

If your heart stops beating, CPR is the only treatment that could save your life. However, you should also know that the rate of surviving CPR is low, especially if one is older or has things wrong with them already.

On average less than 1 in 10 people who receive CPR outside the hospital survive. The chances of surviving CPR are even lower than this in people of advanced age and in people who have medical problems such as advanced forms of cancer and diseases of the heart, kidneys and liver.

Risks of CPR

Although in some cases CPR can save your life, CPR itself causes bodily harm. Many older people have thin bones which get broken as a result of CPR. Bones commonly broken are the ribs and sternum (breast bone).

There is a chance that if you survive CPR you can have severe brain damage or be in a coma for some time or even the rest of your life.

If you are put on a ventilator, you may never be able to breathe again without the support of this machine.

It is clear in the medical and nursing literature that there is a sub-group of nursing home residents for whom the benefits of CPR may outweigh the risks. For this group, an important indicator as to the potential success of CPR is the length of the resuscitation attempt. For the procedure to have the best chance of succeeding, the cardiac arrest needs to be witnessed, or have happened recently, and CPR commenced immediately. Thus, even for those who choose to have CPR, some attempts will be futile.

Help in making your decision is available from the medical or nursing staff and we have resources available to aid with this choice.