



BREATHING MACHINES

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ADVANCE CARE PLANNING



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This brochure can help you decide if you want to be put on a mechanical ventilator (breathing machine) if lung problems make it too hard to breathe on your own.

WHAT IS IT?

Mechanical ventilation is provided by placing a tube through your nose or mouth and into the lungs. The tube is connected to a machine called a ventilator, respirator or breathing machine that forces air into your lungs.

WHEN IS A BREATHING MACHINE USED?

- when you can no longer breathe well enough on your own because of a disease
- as a temporary treatment during or after surgery
- to allow the lungs to rest while an illness is being treated
- to help you breathe when you are not able to take enough of your own breaths to meet your body's needs or during and after CPR.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

People using a breathing machine are not able to talk using their voices. A conscious person may communicate through writing or hand gestures. Activities are limited.

A person on a breathing machine cannot eat. If a breathing machine is needed for a long time, you may need a feeding tube inserted into your stomach for food.

People approaching the end of life are less likely to be helped by a breathing machine.

If someone is very sick or weak, it may take months before the person is strong enough to get off of a breathing machine. Even with a breathing machine, some people get worse and die.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

A breathing machine can cause throat discomfort, damage to vocal cords, fear and sleep problems.

Some complications of using a breathing machine may include pneumonia, collapsed lung, lung damage or infection.

Using a breathing machine requires constant medical care.

A breathing machine may be used on a trial basis to see if you can recover the ability to breathe. If your condition does not improve or gets worse, a decision can be made to remove the breathing tube.

If you decide not to use a breathing machine, you can still receive all other treatments you and your doctor think are right for you. You can have other breathing treatments and medicines to improve breathing. Your comfort would be the primary goal. If you were to stop breathing after other treatments, doctors would allow natural death.

If you do not want to use a breathing machine, you should share your wishes with your doctors and family.