HOSPICE & COMMUNITY CARE

BREATHING HELP

There may come a time when you find it hard to breathe. To make informed decisions about what you may want in this situation it is important to understand your options.

It is important to have a discussion with your doctor about what option may work best for you.

The most common forms of breathing support are:

- Ventilator or breathing machine
- BiPAP
- Medications
- Oxygen

If you have a severe heart or lung condition you may be on a ventilator for months, years or the rest of your life.

- Ventilators are only used for life support.
- Ventilators will not treat or cure medical conditions.

Ventilator/Breathing Machine

The use of a ventilator, often called a breathing machine, is the most invasive form of breathing support. A tube is placed down your windpipe and connected to a machine that forces air into your lungs. Someone on a ventilator is unable to speak, eat or swallow.

BiPAP (Bi-Level Positive Air Pressure)

The use of BiPAP is considered less invasive than a ventilator but can still cause discomfort. A tight fitting mask is placed over your nose and mouth and air is pushed into your lungs. When using a BiPAP it is hard to talk and it must be removed to eat.

- **The ventilator and BiPAP work well with individuals recovering from surgery.**
- **If you have additional life-threatening diseases, neither may be effective.**
- **You may choose medication and oxygen as an alternative to keep you comfortable.**

Medications and Oxygen

Medications are used to manage breathing symptoms such as secretions and cough. Oxygen can also be delivered in a soft nose tube or mask. There are concerns with both options including medication interaction and oxygen tank storage.

If you decide you do not want breathing support:

Talk to your doctor and your loved ones so they know your decisions and a plan can be made. Call Hospice & Community Care to speak with someone about Advance Care Planning or to request Five Wishes®, a free Advance Care Planning booklet.

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WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE

HOSPICE & COMMUNITY CARE

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