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## How Do I Make My Choices Known?

It is important that you talk with your family and physician about your choices. Another way of making your wishes known is through an Advance Directive. This directive will help communicate your wishes if you are unable to do so. You can also name a person to make decisions for you. He/she should make decisions based on your wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment.

## What If I Need Help Making a Decision?

The physician and other members of Saint Peter's healthcare team are available to meet with you and/or your family to review treatment options and life sustaining measures and overall goals of care. The healthcare team includes physicians, nurses, social workers, and chaplains. In the event that additional support is needed, the Ethics Committee is available as a resource.

## Who Can Request that a Case be Reviewed by the Ethics Committee?

You or any concerned family member, healthcare representative, or friend can request the assistance of the Ethics Committee through a hospital staff member or by calling 732-745-8600, extension 6799. The permission of the doctor is not needed to call.

## What If I Change My Mind?

Your decision may be changed at anytime, either verbally or in writing.

## What If I Want to Donate My Organs?

You may wish to donate your organs or tissue. We encourage you to make your wishes known to your family and caregivers.

## If you would like more Information, please contact:

- Social Worker at 732-745-8522
- Chaplain or Pastoral Care Staff at 732-745-8565
- Nursing Staff

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# Making Decisions about Treatments to Sustain Life



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Catholic hospital sponsored by the Diocese of Metuchen • State-designated children's hospital and regional perinatal center  
Regional medical campus of Drexel University College of Medicine • Affiliate of The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia



*Treating you better...for life.*

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## Making Decisions

There are many decisions that you, together with your family and doctor, must make while you are in the hospital. Some are simple, but many are difficult, such as deciding whether to have surgery or not. Other decisions may be soul-searching, such as deciding about treatments to sustain life. We hope that this brochure will help you with these decisions about the goals of your care.

## What Saint Peter's University Hospital Believes

At Saint Peter's, we believe in the dignity of each person. Life is a basic God-given gift of great value. We do all that we can to care for those who are very ill and near the end of life. This care may include making the journey from life to death as comfortable and as respectful as possible. The staff of Saint Peter's is dedicated to using all of our professional skills in caring for all patients, including those who are close to death. A decision not to start or continue treatments to maintain life may be acceptable. Saint Peter's does not take part in euthanasia or assisted suicide.

## When are Decisions about Life-Sustaining Treatment Needed?

There are situations that occur during a serious illness that may require you or your family to make a decision about starting or continuing life-sustaining measures. These situations occur when a patient or health-care representative decides that to continue these measures is not helpful, is burdensome or may lead to more suffering and prolong the dying process. Saint Peter's respects the rights of the patient/healthcare representative to participate in decisions regarding his/her health care. Deciding not to start or to discontinue life-sustaining measures does not mean that all health care will stop. We will continue to provide for your comfort. This includes providing physical, emotional, spiritual support, and the control of pain.

## Asking Questions

It is not unusual to feel uncertain and/or frightened when faced with serious illness. It is important to know as much about your health care as possible. This means asking questions. Your doctor is the primary source of information since you will be making many of the decisions together. Ask the doctor to explain what you don't understand. The nurses, social workers, chaplains, and other members of the healthcare team are additional sources of information for you. Your physician and team can help you address the goals of care.

## What is Informed Consent?

You will be asked to sign an informed consent verifying that you understand and agree to a procedure or treatment that is planned for you. Listed below are some questions you may want to ask your doctor:

1. Exactly what is the treatment or procedure in layman's language?
2. Why is this necessary?
3. What should I expect?
4. What are the benefits?
5. What are the risks involved?
6. Are there other reasonable alternatives?

## Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

What is Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation? CPR is a set of lifesaving procedures conducted on a person whose heart and/or breathing have suddenly stopped functioning. There are situations where resuscitation measures may not be appropriate. For example, a person with an incurable illness may not want CPR done because the burden of the procedure may outweigh the benefit gained.

## What is a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order?

When the heart or breathing stops, the usual treatment is to do CPR. Unless you have a doctor's order on your chart for Do Not Resuscitate (DNR), these procedures will be done. These procedures can include pressing on the chest, a machine to breathe for you, and the use of medications to help your heart beat regularly or support your blood pressure. These options should be discussed with your doctor, other members of the healthcare team, and your family.

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