

# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LIVING WILL AND A DNR?

Both living wills and DNR orders deal with end-of-life decisions, but they are different. You may complete a living will document yourself even when you are healthy. Your living will document specifies in advance the kind of medical treatment you would want if and when you have a terminal illness or are in a permanently unconscious state and are no longer able to state your own wishes.


# DO NOT RESUSCITATE


In Ohio there are several legally recognized ways for you to give doctors and other health care providers instructions about the extent and limitations of the medical treatment you wish to receive, before you actually need the care. You may have heard about advance directives such as living wills and health care powers of attorney. Ohio law also recognizes another tool, called a "DNR order," which helps you and your doctor effectively plan your health care for the end of life. Unlike a living will or health care power of attorney, a DNR order is a medical order that a physician or other authorized person must write.


For more information, please scan the QR Code for the Ohio Department of Health




## CONTACT US:

 41 N. Perry Street, Room 104, Dayton, OH 45422

 937-496-7623

 Clerkhelpcenter@mcoho.org

 Monday-Friday 8:30AM to 4:30PM

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# DNR - DO NOT RESUSCITATE

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# WHAT DOES DNR MEAN?

DNR stands for “Do Not Resuscitate.” A person who does not wish to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) performed, for example, may make this wish known through a DNR order. A DNR order also addresses the various methods used to revive people whose hearts have stopped functioning or who have stopped breathing. Examples of these treatments include chest compressions, electric heart shock, artificial breathing tubes and special drugs.

Under its DNR Comfort Care Protocol, the Ohio Department of Health has established two standardized DNR orders. When completed by a doctor (or certified nurse practitioner or clinical nurse specialist, as appropriate), these standardized DNR orders allow patients to choose the extent of the treatment they wish to receive at the end of life.

A patient with a DNR Comfort Care-Arrest Order will receive all the appropriate medical treatment, including resuscitation, until the patient has a cardiac arrest (heart has stopped beating) or pulmonary arrest (breathing has stopped), at which point comfort care will be provided.

By requesting a DNR Comfort Care Order (DNR-CC), a patient chooses other measures such as drugs to correct abnormal heart rhythms. With this order, comfort care or other requested treatment is provided at a before the heart or breathing stops.

Comfort care (also called symptom management or palliative care) involves keeping the patient comfortable with pain medication and providing palliative (supportive medical) care. A DNR-CC does not mean “do not treat.”

Your doctor can explain the differences in DNR orders. At the time of this printing, Ohio has two trigger points for the DNR protocol (the DNR Comfort Care and DNR Comfort Care-Arrest), but DNR protocol changes are being considered. Consult your health care professional for details.



# HOW DO I MAKE MY WISHES ABOUT CPR KNOWN? HOW DO I GET A DNR ORDER?

If you do want to receive CPR when it is medically appropriate, you do not have to do anything. Emergency squads and other health care providers must provide CPR if you stop breathing or your heart stops beating.

If you do not want CPR, you always have the right to refuse it (or any other medical treatment), but you may not be able to state your wishes when an emergency happens. Therefore, if you do not want CPR, you should speak with your doctor about your wishes, and whether it would be appropriate for you to have a DNR order (a medical order saying that CPR should not be given).

The doctor will explain the different ways the order can be written. Your doctor is encouraged to use the standard Ohio DNR identification form. This form, which is easily recognized by paramedics and other health care workers, remains in effect in any Ohio health care center and can be accessed through the Ohio Department of Health’s website at [www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov)

# HOW WILL THE EMERGENCY SQUAD OR OTHERS KNOW I HAVE A DNR ORDER?

It is wise to provide your doctor and your local hospital with a copy of your advance directives and DNR identification form before an emergency arises. If you are a patient in a hospital or nursing home, the DNR order should be in your medical chart. You or your family also should notify the medical staff that you have such an order anytime you are admitted to a facility or are transferred from one facility to another. If you are receiving care at home you should tell your family and caregivers where to find your DNR order and post it in an easy-to-find place, such as your refrigerator door. You also may want to ask your doctor about getting DNR identification such as a wallet card or bracelet that tells medical personnel you have a DNR order.

# WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND AFTER MY DOCTOR WRITES A DNR ORDER?

You always have the right to change your mind and request CPR. If you do change your mind, talk with your doctor right away about revoking your DNR order. You also should tell your family and caregivers about your decision, mark “cancelled” on the actual DNR order, and destroy any DNR wallet cards or other identification items you may have. If you have a DNR order, but change your mind about the level of care you would want regarding CPR and medical interventions that may prolong life, you will need anew order. Generally, a new DNR will revoke and older DNR.

# HOW DOES A PERSON USE A LIVING WILL TO OBTAIN A DNR ORDER?

Ohio has a standard, widely available living will declaration form. This standard form specifically directs your doctor to write a DNR order for you if two doctors have agreed that you are either terminally ill or permanently unconscious. Your attorney and your doctor can help answer questions about the living will form, including the DNR issue.

