

Ventilator Information

Mechanical ventilation is a life support treatment. A ventilator is a machine that helps people breathe when they are not able to breathe enough on their own. Mechanical ventilation is done by placing a tube through the nose or mouth and into the lungs. A machine called a ventilator pushes air into the lungs. The ventilator is also called a respirator, vent or breathing machine.

A ventilator is used:

- When a person can no longer breathe well enough because of a disease or injury.
- As a temporary treatment during or after surgery.
- During and after cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Those who survive CPR usually need a ventilator for a period of time.

Possible risks of using a ventilator:

- Pneumonia, collapsed lung and lung damage
- Sore throat and unable to speak
- Sleep problems
- Limited movement and need for constant medical attention. Most patients who need a ventilator are cared for in a hospital's intensive care unit (ICU).
- If a ventilator is needed for a week or more, a surgical procedure called a tracheotomy may be performed. This involves placing a tube through the neck and into the airway to help with breathing.

A ventilator may be used until other treatments become effective. How long a person needs to be on a ventilator depends on many factors. These can include:

- A person's overall strength
- The diagnosis and potential recovery status
- How healthy the lungs were before going on the ventilator
- How many other organs are affected (like the brain, heart and kidneys)

When a person is not recovering or is getting worse, a decision may be made to stop ventilator support and allow death to occur. The healthcare team will discuss this with loved ones, as the person may be unable to make the decision. This decision is made by considering the person's wishes as well as their present and expected quality of life.

Making the decision to remove a ventilator can be very difficult. Have a discussion with your medical providers and loved ones about your wishes and decisions before a crisis occurs.



Honoring Healthcare choices: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/24abcc_851530ebee59492d8cedaf7c5fd6f682.pdf

American Thoracic Society: <https://www.thoracic.org/patients/patient-resources/resources/mechanical-ventilation.pdf>