

Ventilator Decision Aid

What is a ventilator and when is it needed?

- A ventilator is a machine that breathes for a person when they cannot breathe on your own.
- When you can't breathe on your own, it is called respiratory failure. Respiratory failure is often a life-threatening emergency.
- A person could need a ventilator for a short time, or permanently.
- It is standard practice in the hospital to put a person who can't breathe on a ventilator unless the person has chosen not to have one.

What happens when a person attached to a ventilator?

- The person is usually given medicine to make them sleepy so that they don't feel any pain or discomfort.
- A tube is placed in the person's mouth or nose. This tube goes down into the windpipe (also called the trachea).
- The ventilator is attached to this tube to push air into the lungs.

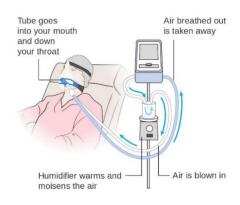


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Who is most likely to be helped by being on a ventilator?

- People who only need to be on a ventilator for a shorter period such as days to weeks.
- People who were healthy before their illness or accident, and are physically strong enough to recover.
- People who feel like they will still have a good quality of life while being on a ventilator.

Who is least likely to be helped by being on a ventilator?

- People who have an illness they will not recover from (also called a terminal illness) like advanced cancer.
- People who are severely ill with heart, lung, liver, or kidney failure.
- People who are very weak, frail, or older.

For more information talk to your doctor, or if you are a patient in the hospital, contact the BCH Palliative Care team at 303-415-7358.