

Answers to Common Questions

The second question is: Can I try life-sustaining treatment for a period of time?

Yes, this is called a time trial. If faced with a permanent brain injury some people may want to try life support for a period of time.

Let's revisit the original scenario: You have a severe permanent brain injury.

You've been in the intensive care unit on temporary life-support and have not shown signs of recovery. The doctors are going to ask your agent whether to proceed with surgeries to put you on permanent life-support.

This question is generally asked at the 2-week point because you can't stay on temporary forms of life support without complications.

Moving to permanent life support requires two important surgeries: the first surgery would create an opening in your neck to permanently attach a ventilator.

The second surgery creates an opening in your abdomen to attach a permanent feeding tube. Please keep in mind that it's important to provide clear guidelines to your agent so they can speak on your behalf.

When your agent speaks for you they must know whether you would want these surgeries and if you do how long you want to remain on life support.

You can specify in terms of days, weeks or months. Remember whatever you decide it's important to write down your wishes in your advance directive and even more important to talk with your agent so that your wishes can be honored.