

MANAGING FOOD AND WATER CONCERNS

What are the concerns about food and water?

- Food refers to the taking in of calories to support your body
- Water refers to the taking in of fluids to support your body

The desire to eat or drink at the end of life usually lessens, which is a natural process of the body. It can become difficult for a person to eat or drink.

What to report to the hospice team?

Tell them if your loved one:

- Is unable to eat or drink
- Cannot swallow food or drink
- Has a dry mouth or skin
- Loses more than five pounds in a week.
- Has loose fitting clothes
- Has dentures that do not fit
- Is going to the toilet less often
- Becomes more sleepy

What can be done?

It is normal for the person to lose interest in food and drink as an illness progresses. Food and drink choices will depend on the person's wishes and illness. Your hospice nurse can discuss this further with you and your loved ones:

- Offer favorite foods and drinks
- Have foods out, and within easy reach of your loved one
- Never force a person to eat or drink
- Sometimes eating and drinking may cause a stomachache
- Give information to your loved one's friends and family about the lack of eating or drinking
- Clean your loved one's mouth often
- It is okay if your loved one chooses not to eat or drink
- Let your loved one rest before and after a meal
- Make mealtime a quiet time
- Offer small meals and use smaller dishes
- Show care of your loved one without use of food or fluids
- Contact your hospice nurse if your loved one feels too sick to eat

If you have any questions, please call us at 262-652-4400