

Reduced Nutrition & Hydration

- Why reduced nutrition and hydration?
 - As the body changes and starts slowing down, one might not feel hungry or thirsty.
 - As the body is changing, there is a reduced ability to metabolize nutrients.
- Normal part of the dying process.
 - Dehydration at very end-of-life helps protect the body from fluid going to places it should not.
- When the ability to swallow becomes weaker and food/fluids are forced, there is a high risk of choking or aspiration.
- Can be difficult for loved ones to accept.
 - Food/fluids can be equated to comfort. During the dying process, physical comfort comes from not eating or drinking.
 - Let the desire for food/fluid be the guide, offer but do not force.
- Express your concerns and worries to the hospice team so they can help guide you through the natural changes during the end-of-life journey.

Why Artificial Nutrition & Fluids are Not Used at End of Life

- Artificial nutrition:
 - Administered through a feeding tube.
 - Feeding tube placement goes through the nose and into the stomach. This is a very uncomfortable procedure and is not typically used by hospice.
 - When there is not the ability to eat, the gastric system is most likely not able to digest food and this could cause severe discomfort and nausea.
- Artificial hydration:
 - Fluids are administered through a needle in the vein.
 - Artificial hydration can cause physical discomfort when not drinking fluids is present in the normal end-of-life process.
 - If the natural process of dehydration at end-of-life is interfered with, there can be issues with the body being able to process the fluids.
 - The lungs can have increased fluids and there can be increased secretions.
 - The stomach or intestines might not tolerate it well and there could be nausea and vomiting.

**If symptoms are not managed or you have any questions, please contact your
Confluence Health Home Care Services Hospice Team: (509) 433-3700**

Interventions to Promote Comfort

- Provide good oral care when the mouth is dry:
 - Make sure there are no pieces of left over food in the mouth
 - Brush teeth/clean dentures
 - Use mouthwash frequently
 - Use saliva substitute spray hospice can provide
 - Use hospice provided wet swabs and mouth moisturizer to clean and moisturize the mouth at least every two hours.
- Offer small sips of fluid and/or ice if wanted and able.
- Moisturize:
 - Lips – use lip moisturizer
 - If oxygen is being used, do not use petroleum products.
 - Eyes – use lubricating eye drops for dry eyes
 - Skin – apply lotion frequently, the skin can get very dry and be uncomfortable

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