

# NUTRITION & HYDRATION: CAREGIVER BASICS

## NUTRITION

Nutrition is the consumption of calories necessary to nourish the body.

## HYDRATION

Hydration is the consumption of fluids necessary to nourish the body

As individuals become sicker and approach end of life, nutrition and hydration requirements may change. Appetite, the physical ability to eat and drink, and desire for fluid and foods may change. This change is a natural progression as the nutritional requirements change.

As your hospice team, we look at each individual on a case-by-case basis to ensure the plan of care is tailored to specific needs, this includes addressing nutrition and hydration. Treatment choices will depend on an individual's: physical condition and ability along with personal values. The aim is to incorporate personal desires and wishes, religious and cultural beliefs, and lifestyle factors. There are times when food and fluids may no longer be beneficial, and can cause more harm than good.

## HOW TO HELP

Discuss options with the Honor Hospice treatment team about the different options available to you. Our team can assist in determining a loved one's values and help you understand the risks, benefits, and alternative options.

Talk with the treatment team about some of the following options:

- Offering food and fluid at smaller, more frequent intervals in smaller amounts.
- Providing oral care frequently to both keep the mouth moist and clean, while allowing for food to be more desirable by improving taste.
- Human touch can be a great source of comfort.
- Assist in eating or drinking as needed if unable to use utensils.
- Talk to family, friends, and the hospice team to determine if food and fluid may make your loved one more uncomfortable.
- Offer fluids in smaller amounts, promote sips of water often.
- Ask your loved one if they are experiencing pain or nausea



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## WHEN TO CONTACT THE HONOR HOSPICE TEAM

Please contact our team when your loved one:

- Can no longer eat or drink
- Has a significant weight loss, of more than 5 pounds within a one week period.
- Has increased confusion
- Is unable to swallow or having difficulty in swallowing
- Has increased abdominal pain
- Is urinating less frequently or smaller amounts

### References

American Nurses Association. (2017). *Nutrition and hydration at the end of life*. American Nurses Association. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from [https://www.nursingworld.org/~4af0ed/globalassets/docs/ana/ethics/ps\\_nutrition-and-hydration-at-the-end-of-life\\_2017june7.pdf](https://www.nursingworld.org/~4af0ed/globalassets/docs/ana/ethics/ps_nutrition-and-hydration-at-the-end-of-life_2017june7.pdf).

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