

# HOPE HEALTHCARE and HOSPICE

## Caregiver tips for EATING and DRINKING near end of life

When a patient with a terminal illness is near death, their body and behavior will go through several different changes. As a caregiver witnessing these changes can cause distress for you and your family members; however, these changes may not necessarily mean the patient is uncomfortable.

Recognizing these changes may help you cope and understand as your loved one's journey comes to an end.

As the end nears, the patient will begin to want less food and water, which is a natural pattern, and it is okay not to expect them to eat or drink as much as they use to. Attempting to get a patient near end-of-life to eat or drink when they no longer want to may cause them anxiety, and they may only do it to please you.

When a patient begins the dying process, they will stop eating or drinking altogether, which is the body's way of preparing itself for death. They do not experience hunger or thirst in the same way as they did when they were healthy. Eating and drinking at the end of life will not change or cure the patient's disease.

Artificial nutrition and hydration (ANH), like tube feedings and intravenous fluids, were initially developed to provide short-term support for acutely ill patients.

However, researchers have found that ANH often leads to complications for patients near the end of life.

### Remember there are other ways you can show your love and support, such as:

- Ice chips to their lips will help with dehydration.
- Apply lip balm to their lips.
- Lotion their hands and feet.
- Play soft music
- Reading
- Calm and quiet environment.



Questions or concerns about Eating and Drinking  
near end of life?

Call our hospice nurse at (337) 703-4674 or visit our  
website at [www.hope-hospice.com](http://www.hope-hospice.com).

