



Eating and Drinking towards the End of Life

The focus of eating and drinking is for comfort and pleasure. Small tastes of favourite flavours may be what the person wants. Offer the person whatever they would like, as long as it's not causing them discomfort. Soft, smooth food can be easiest, such as mousse, yogurt, or soup. Offer drinks in small sips from a cup or from a teaspoon.

Advise

- Make sure that the person is awake, and aim for an upright posture if possible
- Allow plenty of time for each mouthful to be enjoyed and swallowed
- Watch for signs of refusal, such as turning their head away, or keeping their mouth closed
- Try different ways of drinking, such as with a beaker, straw or teaspoon
- Stop if you feel the person is refusing or distressed, or if you hear wet or fast breathing.

Mouthcare

- Aim to keep the mouth clean and moist
- Try using water spray/dropper if the person's mouth is very dry
- Gently clean all around the mouth using a toothbrush with a soft, baby head, if tolerated
- Try a non-foaming toothpaste
- See if the person is more comfortable with or without dentures
- Monitor for signs of oral thrush
- If they want, loved ones can be involved in mouthcare

What changes might there be

It may be that the person has swallowing guidance from the Speech and Language Therapist. This no longer needs to be followed, as long as they're not experiencing distress when eating or drinking, such as coughing or difficulty breathing.

- Often, a person doesn't feel hungry/thirsty. This is a natural part of the body slowing down
- Changes to smell and taste
- Sore or dry mouth, or extra saliva
- Nausea
- Fatigue



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