

Causes of Not Eating or Drinking

When a loved one approaching the end of life stops eating and drinking, families often worry and wonder if the dying person is thirsty, hungry, or suffering.

WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT NOT EATING OR DRINKING?

The dying process can alter the desire to eat, ability to digest food, and the interest in food. When people come within days of death, it is expected that they may eat and drink very little, refuse all food and drink, or may be unable to swallow well. These are normal expected changes.

Drinking less or not at all is usually due to one or many of the following:

- Trouble swallowing
- Nausea
- No appetite
- Little energy
- Turning of attention inward or “beyond”
- Decreasing consciousness



Changes Near the End of Life



OUR MISSION:

Park Place Seniors Living strives to provide enriched life experiences to seniors through innovation and creativity.

OUR VISION:

At Park Place Seniors Living we are known for our unwavering commitment to enriching the lives of those we serve by providing a “voice and a choice” with dignity, respect and empathy.

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What You Can Do to Comfort

Being with a person we love who is dying is an emotional, special time. Understanding the normal changes that can be expected may help. Normal body functions are responding to the process and are slowing in preparation for death. This is natural and expected. It is thought that a natural analgesic effect is produced by not eating and drinking near the end of life. Nature is at work helping the dying person to be more comfortable.

WHAT CAN YOU DO THAT WILL COMFORT?

1 Show your caring and love in other ways by spending time being together reminiscing, giving your loved one a hand or foot massage, listening to music or just sitting quietly.

2 Help keep their mouth moist. Moisten and clean their tongue, lips and the inside of their mouth by using a soft toothbrush for gentle brushing. Moisten their mouth with a sponge (toothette) dipped in water, apply lanolin to their lips, and if they are swallowing, give them small sips of fluid.

What You Can Do to Comfort

IF THE PERSON IS STILL EATING AND DRINKING SMALL AMOUNTS, FOCUS ON PLEASURE NOT ON THE AMOUNT.

- If your loved one does not want to eat, respect that food or fluids are no longer desired or cannot be tolerated.
- Do not force food or drinks.
- Leave the choice and amount up to the dying person.

THERE ARE SPECIFIC SITUATIONS WHEN FLUIDS MAY BE GIVEN:

- Fluids can be given by inserting a small needle just under the skin and infusing fluids.
- If fluids benefit the specific symptoms your loved one is experiencing, your doctor and or the nurse will discuss this with you.

Reviewed by a group of Park Place Family Representatives in April 2022



FAST FACT

Lack of interest in drinking and eating is a normal part of the dying process. Your loved one will not likely feel thirsty and it is best not to force fluids as it may make him/her uncomfortable.