ST. FRANCIS 24/7 CALL CENTER: (321) 269-4240

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
Established 1977 • Licensed 1990

Nutrition

As the body naturally begins to shut down, it is common for hospice patients to lose interest in food and drink. While this can be distressing to caregivers, it is a normal part of the disease process. *Remember care should be focused on the patient's wishes and what they are able to tolerate safely.*

Common Signs and Symptoms to monitor for:

- Refusal to eat or drink
- Lack of interest in food
- Weight loss
- Weakness or tiredness after eating
- Difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)

Tips for Nutrition Management:

- **If the patient is responsive and can swallow safely:**
- **Small Frequent Meals:** Offer small portions of favorite foods more frequently rather than three large meals. This can make eating more manageable and less overwhelming. Allow the patient to rest before and after meals.
- **Easy to Eat Foods:** Provide soft, moist foods that are easier to swallow, like yogurt, mashed potatoes, and soups. Avoid foods that are dry, hard, or difficult to chew.
- **Comfort Foods:** Offer foods that the patient enjoys, regardless of nutritional content. The goal is to provide comfort and pleasure rather than meet dietary guidelines. Make mealtime pleasant and not a chore, try not to become frustrated if the patient wants to skip a meal.
- **Hydration:** Encourage sips of water, ice chips, or small amounts of juice throughout the day. Use oral swabs to keep the mouth moist. Be mindful of the risk of choking and discuss any swallowing difficulties with the hospice team.

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- **No Force Feeding:** Do not force the patient to eat or drink. Respect their wishes and understand that decreased appetite is part of the body's natural process at the end of life.

Record and Report to St. Francis:

- Patient's inability to eat or drink
- Difficulty swallowing (i.e. coughing after swallowing, forceful swallowing, gurgling or changes in voice after swallowing)
- Making less urine
- Becomes suddenly confused or drowsy

St. Francis Reflections is always available to assist with any questions or concerns 24/7

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