

Food at End of Life

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When a loved one is at the end of life, food and fluid can become a major issue. The following suggestions may help alleviate some of the questions or concerns.

Questions/Concerns	Suggestions
Decline in appetite Loss of interest in food	Offer favorite foods. Offer small portions. Offer a small glass of wine before eating.
Difficulty swallowing certain types of food or medication	Moisten the mouth before eating. Serve puddings, smoothies, thickened liquids, mashed potatoes, ice cream.
Food odors bother patient	If possible, eliminate offending food or serve it warm rather than hot.
Unable to tolerate spicy foods	Serve blander foods such as rice, custard, or oatmeal.
Patient feels overwhelmed by the portions	Use small plates and glasses. Serve bite-size portions.
Patient thinks of something they want then only eats one bite	Save until later or serve only small amounts at a time.
Appetite varies widely day to day	Be flexible. Offer food but do not pressure.
Fluids hard to draw up from a straw	Cut the straw in half.

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