

## Food and Fluid at the End of Life Training Sheet

It's common for people with life-limiting conditions to experience a decrease in or lose their appetite or desire to drink. Some people experience taste changes; favorite foods no longer taste good. This is a natural response of the body as the organs are slowing down and it becomes difficult to manage the intake of food and/or fluids.

Changes in eating and drinking is a normal occurrence towards end of life. Seeing the changes in eating and drinking can be very hard for you and your family.



### WHAT SHOULD YOU REPORT TO YOUR UNITY CARE TEAM?

- Changes in appetite or drinking
- Trouble swallowing
- Dry mouth, tongue, or skin
- Weight loss
- Urinating less frequently or urine that's dark (amber) in color

### INTRAVENOUS ARTIFICIAL NUTRITION AND FLUIDS

When a person is nearing the end of life, adding artificial food and fluids intravenously is not likely to make the person stronger or prolong their life, and it may cause discomfort.

- Artificial foods and fluids given intravenously may make some symptoms worse because body systems are slowing down. The body cannot process the food and fluids, and it may collect in the stomach, lungs, arms or legs. This may cause swelling, trouble breathing, nausea and vomiting.
- Usually the person does not experience thirst or hunger.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PROVIDE COMFORT?

- If the person is awake, it may be comforting to offer ice chips if tolerated.
- Have the person upright (if able to tolerate) to make swallowing easier.
- Offer small portions. You can always refill the dish.
- Thicker liquids or soft, moist foods may be easier to swallow.
- Do not force food or fluids. Support the person's decision if he/she refuses food and/or fluids.
- Signs a person may not want to eat or drink are pressing lips together, biting the spoon or coughing.
- Using a mouth swab, gently sponge inside the mouth to relieve any dryness.
- Moisten the person's eyes or use a warm, damp cloth over them a few times each day.
- Moisten the person's lips by applying lip balm to prevent dryness.
- Help family and friends understand why eating and drinking may make the person uncomfortable.

Contact Unity anytime you have questions or concerns about food and fluid intake.

Call Unity 24/7 at **920.338.1111** or **800.990.9249**

If there is no answer and the phone continues to ring, call **920-490-7418**.