

4–6 Days Before Dying

During the final several days of life, patients often become much less responsive and may stop eating or drinking almost entirely.

Common Changes

- Decreased level of consciousness and increased sleepiness
- Difficulty swallowing liquids or medications
- Abnormal vital signs and irregular breathing
- Minimal interest in food or fluids

What You Can Do

- Continue speaking calmly and reassuringly
- Focus on comfort and positioning
- Provide mouth care with swabs, lip balm, or crushed ice if tolerated
- Do not force food or fluids
- Continue medications for comfort as directed

Important Understanding

- Reduced hydration and intake are expected at this stage
- The body is gradually shutting down and needs less food and fluid
- Comfort-focused care is the priority

This educational material is intended to support caregivers and families. Always discuss concerns or sudden changes with your hospice team.