

APPETITE AND FOOD

Changes in appetite and food preferences are to be expected

Reasons for Change



With illness and at end of life, our sense of taste changes - what tasted good before may not now



Some medications, and prior treatments (chemo) can change our sense of taste



The amount of saliva decreases, mouth becomes drier which effects taste and ability to eat



As illness progresses and the body starts to shut down, it is natural to decrease and eventually stop eating and drinking

What you can do:

- Allow and encourage whatever food or drink is asked for. Avoid restricting food unless on specific restrictions such as low salt diet to prevent excess fluid retention
- Keep up oral hygiene. Discuss with hospice team how best to manage ([**See Mouth Care**](#))
- Make sure dentures still fit and are not contributing to not eating
- Softer foods are often better tolerated, such as smoothies, Ensure™ type drinks
- Discuss if feeling sad or anxious is contributing to a decrease in appetite

Things to try:

- Artificial saliva for dry mouth - Xylitol (Allday™ dry mouth spray)
- **For thirst:** As drinking becomes more difficult, *Mini Mint Ice Cubes* can provide relief ([**link here for recipe**](#))
- **Medications:** There are some medications that can stimulate appetite, ask your hospice team
- Also ask team if there any medications that may be interfering with appetite

- It is important to understand that at some point your loved one is not going to want to eat or drink and this is a natural part of the dying process
- To the best of our knowledge, the lack of food and water at this stage does not cause suffering and is a natural process