



EATING AND DRINKING

The changes in ability to eat and drink represent one of the most difficult challenges that caregivers have to deal with

Behavioral Changes

- It is important to understand that people stop eating during the last stages of dementia.
- The inability, the lack of desire to take anything by mouth, is part of the natural course of this disease
- It is understandable that the family of patients dying with dementia are concerned and anxious about their loved ones not eating or drinking
- There have been many years of study and research into whether patients suffer by not eating or drinking in the last stages of dementia
- To the best of our knowledge, the stopping of eating and drinking is not associated with suffering. It is what the patient with dementia's body and brain is saying is best at this time

Physical Changes

- To try and force food and liquid into a person in the last stages of dementia actually increases suffering because the brain and body have started to shut down and are unable to process solid food and fluids
- The decrease in ability of oral intake is part of the natural progression of the incurable disease of dementia
- The gut starts to shut down and putting food into the stomach will increase likelihood of nausea, vomiting and aspiration (food and liquid getting into the lungs)
- The gut and kidneys have difficulty handling liquids and forcing fluids causes the body to retain the fluid, making breathing more difficult, and the body more swollen

- At this stage, what is in the best interest for your loved one is to attend to mouth care ([Click to view the Mouth Care infographic](#))