

## Guidance



- **Withdrawing from eating and drinking is a natural part of the dying process. As illness progresses and the body weakens, feelings of hunger and thirst may decrease. Therefore, the priority and focus should be on maintaining comfort and not forcing food and drink**
- **Fluids or food by drip or tube are usually not appropriate and will not improve quality of life or prolong life and may increase discomfort**
- **Plans for hydration and nutrition are made on an individual basis depending on the person's capacity and may require a best interest decision**

## Food & Drink



- **Follow the person's verbal or non verbal signs e.g. pushing the food away or clamping their mouth closed**
- **The person should be offered foods and drinks which they enjoy "little and often"**
- **Use a teaspoon to offer small amounts of food or liquids**
- **Mashed or pureed foods may be easier**
- **Cold foods e.g. ice cream and sorbet may be refreshing**
- **Focus on foods the person enjoys**
- **Use a short wide cup for a better angle and lip closure**
- **Sports bottle/spouted beaker may be used to control the flow of the drink**
- **Offer fizzy/cold drinks in favourite flavours**
- **Encourage single sips with a pause between mouthfuls to allow a rest and a breath**

## Comfort



- **Consider each person and situation individually**
- **Follow any existing eating, drinking and swallowing recommendations or advice from a Speech and Language Therapist**
- **Ensure the person is sitting as upright as possible**
- **Only give food and drink when the person is alert. Wiping the face and neck gently with a warm damp cloth may raise the level of alertness**
- **Support the jaw (if tolerated) by massaging under the chin in a forward rotatory motion to promote jaw and tongue movement to help the person swallow**

## Mouthcare & Tastes for Pleasure



- **Mouthcare can offer comfort and should be carried out as regularly as every 2-4 hours depending on the situation**
- **Use a soft toothbrush with non-foaming toothpaste e.g. oranurse/pronamel (available from pharmacist)**
- **Saliva replacement gel may be prescribed by the person's GP if the mouth is very dry and uncomfortable**
- **Check for changes such as thrush or ulcers and seek advice from a healthcare professional**
- **When dentures are loose or are no longer comfortable to wear they should be removed**
- **Dab a swab or a toothbrush into a favourite flavour then shake off the excess and dab on the lips**
- **Tastes for pleasure can be offered at regular intervals and as often as desired**

## Coughing



- **At end of life people may experience coughing episodes with food or drinks. Speech & Language Therapy referral is not always required**
- **Ensure the person is sitting as upright as possible**
- **Consider offering naturally thick drinks such as milkshakes, thick fruit juices or smoothies**
- **If coughing and distress continues please consider contacting the person's GP or check their care plan for contacts or guidance**