

## Nutrition

There are many reasons a person's appetite and food intake can decrease. Although an encouraging, gentle approach may help, we must respect an individual's choice. Empath Health recommends not forcing someone to eat or constantly remind them of their decreased appetite.

You can encourage eating by serving meals in a relaxed, comfortable and bright atmosphere. When feasible, eat in the room with your loved one. Remove unpleasant odors and do not schedule unpleasant procedures around mealtime.

**What to Do:**

- Offer mouth care before and after meals to freshen up the mouth and stimulate taste buds.
- Make the most of breakfast as appetite tends to decrease as the day goes on.
- Offer pain medications on a schedule that reduces discomfort before and during meals. For example, offer pain medication 30 minutes before mealtime.
- Keep the head of the bed elevated to promote digestion for 15-30 minutes after meals.
- Adjust the diet if your loved one can no longer wear dentures. Soft foods or small, bite-sized portions of food may be softened with sauces or gravy.
- Inform the Empath nurse if nausea is a problem. The nurse can ask the doctor about ordering a medication to reduce nausea.
- Offer small, frequent meals and leave a high-protein snack or drink at the bedside. Empath can provide information and recipes for high-protein supplements.
- Consider patient requests. For example, if the patient requests ice cream for breakfast, be open to this.
- If the patient is lying flat, elevate the head of the bed before beginning the meal.

**When to Call Empath Health:**

- If the patient is unable to swallow
- If the patient reports pain when swallowing
- If the patient reports nausea or vomiting

Call Empath Health with any questions (888) 855-2838:

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