

## Food & Fluids at the End of Life



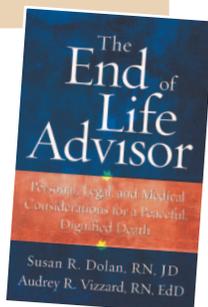
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- ✓ **you find yourself headed for a crisis, or**
- ✓ **you find yourself in a crisis.**

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Susan R. Dolan RN, JD brings twenty years of hospice experience to her work as a healthcare consultant, advocate and advisor on end-of-life care. A registered nurse and attorney, Susan is coauthor of the 2009 award winning book, *The End-of-Life Advisor: Personal, Legal and Medical Considerations for a Peaceful, Dignified Death*. Susan appears in the critically acclaimed film *Consider the Conversation: a documentary on a taboo subject*.

In addition to helping private clients, healthcare professionals and care facilities, Susan speaks for groups and large fund raising events and publishes a popular blog at Huffington Post.

Witnessing a loved one's refusal of food and fluids at the end of life can be distressing. It helps to remember that patients do not die because they stop eating, they stop eating because they are dying. The desire for food and liquids fades at the end of life.

Loss of appetite is a natural sign that the body is preparing to shut down. The resulting dehydration triggers the release of endorphins in the body, which aid in natural pain relief. Dehydration also prevents the uncomfortable accumulations of excess fluid in body tissues.

Forcing food and fluids using a feeding tube gets in the way of a natural and comfortable dying process for someone who is terminally ill. The medical evidence is clear: dehydration at the end of life aids a natural and compassionate death. It is medically, legally, and ethically appropriate to withhold or discontinue food and fluids that are no longer beneficial.

When the body's message seems to be "no more," follow the patient's lead. When it comes to food and drink at the end of life, less is more. A good motto is, "offer, but don't force."

**Learn more at [Endoflifeadvisor.com](http://Endoflifeadvisor.com).** While we have nothing to say about getting into this world, we certainly have a lot to say about getting out!



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