



### WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL NUTRITION?

Artificial nutrition (also called “artificial hydration and nutrition”) is a treatment that provides food and water by tubes if you are unable to eat or drink on your own. This information can help you decide if you want to try artificial nutrition.

#### How does artificial nutrition work?

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Fluids and liquid food are sent directly to your stomach through a tube, sometimes called a feeding tube. If you need artificial nutrition for a few days, a tube is inserted through your nose to your stomach. If you need artificial nutrition for more than a week, a tube is placed into your stomach through a small cut. An IV tube can be placed in your vein to give medicine and fluid, but it will not provide long-term nutrition.

#### Will artificial nutrition work for me?

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Artificial nutrition is most effective if:

- You are generally healthy.
- You need artificial nutrition for a short time to recover from surgery or sudden illness.

Artificial nutrition is not as effective if:

- Your body is weak from chronic health problems.
- You have an illness that can no longer be treated.
- You are older and very weak.

Ask your health care provider about how well artificial nutrition would work for you. If you want artificial nutrition, your health care provider will talk about which option is best for you.

## Are there risks of artificial nutrition?

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- Food can spill into your lungs and cause infection.
- If your body is not working well, it can't use food and water. Fluids can build up and cause diarrhea, swelling, pain and difficulty breathing. Restraints may be needed to keep the tube in.
- Bleeding and skin irritation.
- Shorter life in some situations.

## What if I choose not to have artificial nutrition?

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You may worry about what happens if you no longer receive food or water. Most people near death do not feel hunger. You may have a dry mouth and a sense of thirst. You will be given good mouth care and ice chips to help. Even if you choose not to have artificial nutrition, you will still receive medical care to keep you comfortable, manage pain and control symptoms so you can live as well and as long as is possible. If appropriate, you may choose to receive food and drink by mouth as long as this is enjoyable and comfortable for you.

## How do I decide what is best for me?

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Talk with your health care provider and your loved ones about what is important to you. Some questions to consider are:

- Will my illness improve or worsen over time?
- Is my illness curable?
- Will artificial nutrition improve my condition?
- How will artificial nutrition affect my quality of life?

## What should I do after I decide?

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Discuss your decision with your health care provider and your health care agent. We can help you make a plan that will follow your wishes. And remember that your decision can change. Revisit your decision regularly as you get older or your health changes.