

PRIMARY CARE 10 TOP TIPS

Nutrition for each stage of the cancer pathway: Advanced cancer/ End of life

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- 1** Understand and acknowledge the potentially differing expectations of patients, family and carers with regards to nutrition, which can have physical, social, cultural and emotional implications.
- 2** Explain to patient and family/carers that a decrease in appetite, eating and drinking is part of the natural process of dying. This may help to diminish pressures and anxieties.
- 3** Discussion of weight loss and eating problems provides an important opportunity to discuss disease progression, dying and to revisit care plan.
- 4** Goals should not be to reverse nutritional deficit but to manage symptoms and improve quality of life.
- 5** Consider and treat symptoms that have an impact on nutritional status for example pain, dry mouth, nausea, gastrointestinal disturbances.
- 6** Consider the need to review and relax dietetic restrictions for pre-existing conditions for example diabetes or high cholesterol.
- 7** If a patient is struggling to eat:
 - a. Discuss what foods may bring enjoyment to the patient.
 - b. Offer small portions.
 - c. Offer frequent meals or snacks.
 - d. Offer nourishing/milky drinks.
 - e. Avoid exposure to cooking smells.
 - f. Offer easier to chew soft foods that take less effort to eat.
- 8** Consider the use of oral nutritional supplements which may improve quality of life and be seen as supportive by patients, family and carers.
- 9** In patients thought to be dying and seen to be losing their ability to swallow, good oral hygiene remains paramount.
- 10** On some occasions specialist input such as local hospices or palliative care teams may be appropriate.

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