

End-of-life care for people with dementia

Eating and drinking at the end of life

social care
institute for excellence



Activity

Read the following case study and try to answer the questions that follow below.

Pete is a 75-year-old man with advanced Alzheimer's. He was discharged from hospital last week following treatment for his third chest infection in six months. He now totally depends on his wife Sarah for all care, is immobile and cannot communicate. He makes only brief eye contact.

Over the last six months Pete has also had difficulty in swallowing: his food and drinks seem to be going down the wrong way. Sarah is always worried that he is not getting enough to eat and drink.

His GP now thinks that Pete has had a stroke and is now only able to take very small amounts of pureed food and thickened fluids. Pete is very weak and sleeps for most of the day.

Sarah asks you if Pete is going to starve to death and if he is suffering. She also asks if he can be given a tube for feeding.

1. How do you as a care worker feel when you see someone taking less to eat and drink or is unable to swallow?
2. Why do you think that his wife thinks that he is starving to death?
3. Why do you think she feels he might be suffering?
4. How might **you** help Sarah understand why he is eating and drinking less?