What is Artificial Hydration?

Artificial hydration is a form of life-sustaining treatment for those near end of life.

For people who are not at end of life, artificial hydration may help.

Artificial hydration can be provided by placing a tube directly into the stomach, the intestine or a vein. Tube feeding provides artificial nutrition to those who cannot eat enough or are unable to eat. A feeding tube for short-term use is an N-G tube. An N-G tube is run through the nose and into the stomach.

Fluids can also be delivered through a small needle that is inserted in a vein usually in arms and hooked up to bags of fluid.

These methods of hydration can be temporary or a permanent basis.

Does Artificial Hydration work?

Studies have shown that administering fluids intravenous to a terminally ill patient at the end of life offers little, if any, benefit. Risks include infection at the insertion site or in the blood, and fluid overload resulting in swelling or even breathing problems in more severe cases.

For people near end of life and in late stages of dementia (memory loss), it is normal for people to stop drinking.

Dry Mouth is a side effect of mouth breathing which usually occurs at end of life and artificial hydration does not prevent dry mouth. Mouth care is provided to moisten mouth & lips to provide comfort.