

# Decreased Ability to Swallow During the Dying Process

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The swallow reflex may diminish or become absent during the imminent stage and aspiration could result due to forcing of fluids and food. Choking can be very uncomfortable for the patient, and aspiration can be a cause of death. A family member who feeds the patient who has no swallow reflex often experiences feelings of guilt if a choking episode ensues. Caregivers, therefore, are instructed on the patient's ability or inability to swallow as well as the disadvantages of forcing food and fluids.