

PATIENT EDUCATION/SELF MANAGEMENT

HUNGER STRIKE PATIENT FACT SHEET

RISKS OF FLUID REFUSAL

- ◆ Not drinking fluid can cause **death** within days.
- ◆ Not drinking fluid can cause lasting organ damage.
- ◆ You will get symptoms very soon if you do not drink fluids.
- ◆ You should drink at least 6 cups of fluid every day.



RISKS OF FASTING

- ◆ Not eating food for a long time (prolonged fasting) can cause **death**.
- ◆ Not eating food can cause lasting organ damage.
- ◆ You may become dizzy during your hunger strike. You should move slowly and carefully to avoid falls.
- ◆ You may get many other symptoms the longer you refuse food such as: weakness, confusion, vomiting, stomach pain and higher risk of infections.
- ◆ If you are in good health when you start to refuse food and you keep on drinking water, you will probably survive for weeks.
- ◆ After prolonged fasting (starvation) you may have lasting organ damage even after you start eating again and gain weight.

RISKS OF REFEEDING

- ◆ **Death** may happen when you start eating after not eating for a long time. This is called Refeeding Syndrome.
- ◆ If you have lost more than 10 lbs or have not eaten for more than 14 days, talk to health care staff **before** you eat again.
- ◆ Your risk of death is less if you start eating under medical care.
- ◆ If you have not eaten for many days, you should start to eat by taking only small amounts of food the first few days and then step up to normal eating over 5-7 days.

ABOUT YOUR HUNGER STRIKE



- ◆ **MONITORING:** Health care staff will watch you for signs of serious illness during your hunger strike.
- ◆ **ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE:** You may access health care services at any time during your hunger strike just like when you are not on a hunger strike.
- ◆ **MEDICATION CHANGES:** Your primary care provider may change or stop some of your medications during your hunger strike to lower your risk of problems.

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Information for Patients with Prolonged Fasting

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- ◆ You have not been eating for such a long time that you are in danger of lasting medical harm, even with medical care.
- ◆ You may die, even after you start to eat again.
- ◆ Now is the time for you to think about what medical care you want when you are no longer able to talk to health care staff.
- ◆ Health care staff is concerned about your health so they will check with you to see if you understand that you may die if you refuse food or fluid and that you have clear reasons for refusing food or fluid.
- ◆ If you go into a coma or your heart stops, you will get all the medical care needed to try to save your life, including CPR, food, and fluids.
- ◆ Health care staff will not give you food or fluid if you make it clear that you do not want them to.

Advance Directive for Health Care (Form Number, CDCR 7421)

- ◆ You should fill out the Advance Directive form if you want to name someone who can make medical decisions for you when you are unable to speak for yourself. This person should be someone who knows your wishes and is willing, able, and available to make these decisions.
- ◆ An Advance Directive also lets health care staff know what medical care you want or do NOT want when you are unable to speak for yourself.
- ◆ If you want to complete an Advance Directive, ask health care staff for the form. Before you sign it, return the completed form to your health care provider to talk about your choices.



Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) (Form Number, CDCR 7465)

- ◆ A POLST form is a doctor's order that stays in your medical record. The POLST form records your wishes about specific life saving treatments.
- ◆ This form is completed by you and your health care provider.

If you have questions or are concerned about changes in your health you may contact health care staff at any time.