

How do I eat well when I have a

Dry or Sore Mouth or Throat

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You may experience a dry or sore mouth as a side-effect of your treatment. The lining of your throat may also become red and inflamed. This can make eating and swallowing more difficult. You will need to take more care with your diet and oral hygiene to maintain your weight and keep your strength.

The following suggestions may help.

- Try to keep your mouth clean and fresh, especially before and after your meals.
 - Clean your teeth with fluoride toothpaste and a soft toothbrush at least twice a day or after every meal.
 - If you have dentures, clean them after every meal and soak them overnight in a suitable denture cleansing solution. Check with your nurse, doctor or radiographer if you are unsure what type of solution to use. During the day, leave them out of your mouth for as long as possible, to prevent them irritating your gums.
 - Dissolve one teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda in a pint of warm water. Use this solution to keep your mouth and tongue clean and moist. Swirl the solution around you mouth and use it with a small soft or baby toothbrush to clean your tongue to prevent it becoming 'coated'. Avoid adult or large, hard-bristled toothbrushes and tongue-cleaners. This will help prevent food tasting unpleasant and will make eating more enjoyable.
 - Ask your nurse, doctor or radiographer for advice about suitable mouthwashes. Some may be too strong for you, so you may need to be patient and try a few brands to find one that suits you.
- Soft, moist or liquidized foods are often easier to chew and swallow.

- Keep food moist by adding sauces and gravies.
- Drink plenty of fluid – at least 1.5-2litres (3 pints) each day.
- Take nourishing drinks such as milk, milk shakes or nutritional supplement drinks as advised by your dietitian.
- Smoking and alcohol may irritate your dry or sore mouth. Avoid these to limit any discomfort in your mouth.

Different things will affect your ability to eat and drink. Consider the points below.

- Temperature of food and drink.
 - Very hot or very cold foods may hurt or irritate your mouth.
 - Chilled food and drinks may be soothing.
 - Drinking through a straw may be easier.
- Food texture.
 - Smooth food, without lumps such as custard, mousse, crème caramel, trifle may be easier to eat.
 - Coarse or dry foods including crisps, toast, muesli and dry biscuits may be difficult to eat.
- Foods that may hurt or irritate include:
 - salty or spicy foods like pickle, chilli, curries
 - acidic foods, fruits and juices, for example vinegar, tomato, orange, grapefruit, lemon*
 - alcohol, especially spirits.
- Ask your nurse or doctor for advice on painkillers.

If your mouth and/or throat are dry:

- sip fluids frequently
- use a water spray or carry a bottle of water with you to freshen your mouth
- be careful with fizzy drinks and tangy fruits such as lemon, grapefruit, orange and pineapple if your mouth is sore*
- ice cubes and lollies are refreshing, you could also add crushed ice to drinks
- try sugar-free boiled sweets or sugar-free chewing gum to stimulate saliva production (these are more effective than full-sugar varieties)
- artificial saliva sprays, pastilles and oral gels may be helpful – ask your nurse, doctor or radiographer for more information.

Remember

The inflammation and discomfort that you may experience can continue for some time after your treatment has finished.

Following a soft diet may also ease your symptoms. Ask you team for more information on this.

*Fruit juices, in particular cranberry, grapefruit, and Seville orange juice, may affect the way in which some drugs work. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian for further information.

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