



Eating Tips for Sore Mouth and Throat

UHN

For patients who have soreness in the mouth and throat during cancer treatment.

This pamphlet covers:

- Foods to avoid and foods to try
- Simple ways to make it easier to chew and swallow
- How to manage pain that happens with chewing and swallowing

Some cancers and cancer treatments can cause a sore mouth and throat which can make it difficult to eat and drink. Changing the texture of foods and avoiding certain foods and liquids can make it easier to eat and drink. Focusing on high calorie and high protein foods can also help.

Simple Ways to Make It Easier to Chew and Swallow

- Cook foods until soft and tender.
- Add extra margarine, butter, sauce, broth, sour cream, gravy or cream soup to cooked meats and vegetables.
- Soften foods by soaking in soup or milk or dunking in warm beverages; for example, cereal in milk, crackers in soup, and cookies in warm milk.
- Chop, mash, grind or blend foods with extra liquid; for example, mashed potatoes with butter and milk, ground meat with gravy, blended fruit with cream.
- Add grated cheese or silken tofu to cooked vegetables, soups and casseroles.
- Drink extra liquid with each bite of food if your mouth is dry.
- Eat or drink foods and liquids that are at room temperature if hot or cold temperatures hurt.
- Use a straw to drink if you have sores in your mouth. This can help direct the liquids past the sores. Do NOT use a straw if you have been instructed to avoid them for safety reasons by your health care team.

Foods to Try

- Canned or flaked meat or fish. Mix with extra mayonnaise, cream soup or sauce.
- Ready-made infant foods. Add these foods to soups and casseroles. The pureed meats will add extra protein.
- Scrambled eggs and omelettes. Make with whole milk or soy beverage.
- A beaten egg added to broth or soup while it is cooking.
- Skim milk powder stirred into a soft dish or liquid for extra protein.
- Cottage cheese and yogurt.
- Soft or silken tofu. Add to soup and casseroles for extra protein.

Foods to Avoid

Avoid these foods ONLY if they start to cause you pain:

- Crusty bread or toast and coarse cereals such as granola.
- Dry snack foods such as potato chips, pretzels, nuts and popcorn.
- Raw vegetables and hard fruits.
- Citrus fruits and juices (like oranges, grapefruits, lemons).
- Acidic foods such as fresh or canned tomatoes, tomato juice, salad dressings, pickles and vinegar.
- Very spicy foods and condiments such as pepper, chili, hot sauces and barbecue sauce.
- Tough, dry meat.
- Fried foods.
- Alcoholic beverages.

Fluids are Important

Frequent, small sips of liquids throughout the day will help keep you hydrated and will also keep your mouth and throat moist. Aim for 6 to 8 cups or 1.5 to 2 litres every day.

Good choices that have protein and calories are:

- Hot chocolate made with milk or soy beverage
- Whole milk, milkshakes and smoothies
- Soy beverages
- Carnation® Breakfast Essentials™, Ensure®, Ensure Plus®, Boost®, Boost plus Calories® and Boost Fruit Flavoured Beverage®
- Store-brand or generic nutritional drinks

Good choices that have calories:

- Fruit crystal drinks like Koolade®
- Low acid juice such as grape, or fruit nectar drinks such as peach or pear
- Sodas like ginger ale
- Iced tea
- Gatorade®

How to Keep Your Mouth Clean and Moist

- Rinse your mouth with baking soda mouthwash, normal saline or flat club soda when you wake up in the morning and often throughout the day. This will also help to remove saliva that has become thick and ropey during treatment.

Baking soda mouthwash recipe

Stir 1 teaspoon of baking soda into 16 ounces (2 cups) of warm water.

Normal Saline

Stir 1 teaspoon of salt in 16 ounces (2 cups) of warm water.

- Avoid using mouthwashes that contain alcohol. The alcohol can hurt or dry your mouth.
- Use a room humidifier or vaporizer (especially at night).
- Ask your pharmacist if it would be helpful to use ‘artificial saliva’.

How to Manage Pain that Happens with Chewing and Swallowing

- There are special mouthwashes that can be used before meal times to numb the mouth or throat. Ask your health care team.
- Pain medications can be matched with your mealtimes to make it easier to eat. Ask your health care team.
- If it is difficult to swallow pills, ask if the medication is available as a liquid or if the pills can be crushed and mixed with pureed fruit, ice cream or pudding.

Helpful Resources at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre

Available at the Patient & Family Library (main floor)

- “Adding Calories and Protein to Your Diet” pamphlet
- “Goes Down Easy: Recipes to help you cope with the challenge of eating during cancer treatment” cookbook

To search online for these and other helpful resources, go to

www.theprincessmargaret.ca:

- Click on “Patients and Families” on the blue menu bar
- Scroll down and click on “Search the Library”

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