

Sore Mouth and Throat



UHN

For patients who are having soreness in the mouth and throat as a side effect of chemotherapy, radiation therapy or cancer

- ✓ 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 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.
- Take smaller bites of food. This can help your mouth to make more saliva. If you are not able to make more saliva, drink extra liquid with each bite of food.
- Eat or drink foods and liquids that are at room temperature. Very hot or very cold foods and liquids may hurt.
- Use a straw to drink if you have sores in your mouth.

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information:
www.uhnpatienteducation.ca

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Foods to Try

- Canned, flaked meat or fish. Mix with lots of mayonnaise, cream soup or sauce.
- Ready-made infant foods. These foods are already pureed and can be added 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.

Foods to Avoid

- 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 (i.e. orange, grapefruit, lemon).
- 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.
- Caffeine-containing beverages such as coffee and cola drinks.
- 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 eight ounce 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
- Nestle Breakfast anytime®, Ensure®, Ensure Plus®, Boost®, Boost plus Calories® and Boost Fruit Drink®

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
- Flat ginger ale

How to Keep Your Mouth Clean and Moist

- Rinse your mouth with baking soda mouthwash or club soda when you wake up in the morning and often throughout the day. Gargle with the mouthwash if the pain is in your throat. This will also help to remove saliva that has become thick and ropery during treatment.

Baking soda mouthwash recipe:

Stir 1 tsp of baking soda into 8 ounces of warm water.

- Do NOT use commercial 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 PMH Patient & Family Library

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