

Help with eating if you have... a sore mouth

This leaflet gives advice on eating and drinking with a sore mouth.

General advice

If your mouth or throat is sore, eating and drinking can be difficult. The following suggestions may help you.

- Try soft or mashed foods with extra sauce or gravy and allow hot foods to cool slightly before eating.
- Cut foods up small so less chewing is needed.
- Chilled food and drinks may be soothing.
- Drink plenty of fluids at least 1.5-2 litres (3-3.5 pints) per day.
- Fresh pineapple chunks or juice clean the mouth and can be refreshing.
- Blackcurrant or rosehip syrup, peach juice or peach nectar may ease a painful mouth.
- Try sugar-free boiled sweets or gum to stimulate saliva production.
- Drinking through a straw may be helpful if your lips are sore.
- Sip fluids in between mouthfuls of food.
- Using plastic or smaller cutlery may be easier.

Avoid foods if they may include:

- Strong flavoured foods, such as spices, garlic, mustard.
- Acidic foods, like vinegar, pickles, and citrus fruits or juices.
- Salty foods, such as crisps and nuts.
- Coarse or dry foods, like toast, crackers, crisps, dry biscuits and bacon.
- Fizzy drinks.
- Alcohol, especially spirits.
- Sticky textured foods, like chocolate and peanut butter.
- Very hot foods or drinks.
- Mouthwashes containing alcohol.
- Smoking and drinking alcohol can also irritate your mouth.

Always let your doctor or nurse know if your mouth is very sore – there may be mouthwashes and gels that can help. If you are concerned, go and see your doctor.

If you experience inflammation and discomfort during or after a treatment, following an easy to chew diet may feel more comfortable.

Other helpful leaflets available from your dietitian:

- Making the most of what you eat: Easy to chew.
- Nourishing drinks.

Ideas for meals and snacks

Eat little and often – three meals a day, with snacks, puddings or nourishing drinks in between.

Breakfast

- Weetabix, Porridge or Ready Brek with milk
- Scrambled eggs with bread and butter.
- Stewed or tinned fruit with yoghurt.

Snack meals

- Sandwiches with tuna or egg mayonnaise.
- Well-cooked baked potato with baked beans or cottage cheese.
- Soup enriched with cream, grated cheese or milk powder, served with bread and butter.

Main meals

- Omelette with cheese or ham and mashed potato.
- Fish and parsley sauce, mashed potato and softly cooked broccoli.
- Minced beef or lamb in gravy, mashed potato and carrots.
- Macaroni cheese or tuna pasta bake.

Puddings

- Milk pudding, mousse, fruit fool, milk jelly, crème caramel, instant whip, blancmange, ice-cream.

Nourishing drinks

- Take nourishing drinks using fortified milk (add 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to full cream milk), use in milkshakes, Horlicks, Ovaltine or hot chocolate.
- Nutritional supplements/soups available from supermarkets or chemists: Meritene, Complan, Build Up, Nurishment.

If you continue to have difficulty with eating because of a sore mouth, ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a dietitian.

Useful Contacts

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk

World Cancer Research Fund www.wcrf-uk.org

Cancer Research UK www.cancerresearchuk.org

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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