

Nutrition tips to help manage difficulty swallowing and mouth sores



DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING

Cancer treatments, particularly those targeting the head and neck, can damage cells and make it difficult to swallow.

CHOOSE SOFT FOODS

- Opt for foods like scrambled eggs, mashed vegetables, puddings, and noodles
- Eat soups and stews made with diced or pureed ingredients
- Use yogurt, juice, and jellies to help you swallow food

AVOID FOODS THAT MAY CAUSE IRRITATION

- Try not to eat citrus foods or tomatoes and tomato-based products
- Don't eat hot, spicy foods
- Dip hard, coarse foods—like crusty bread—into milk or tea to soften them

CHANGE HOW YOU EAT

- Cut foods into small pieces and eat them one at a time
- Cook foods longer until soft and tender
- Drink through a straw if that's easier for you



MOUTH SORES

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy eliminate rapidly growing cells, including the healthy cells that line the inside of the mouth. This can result in oral sores and infections.

CHOOSE FOODS THAT ARE SOFT OR SOOTHING

- Eat soft, high-protein foods, like eggs, chicken salad, and hummus
- Try fruits with a high water content, like watermelon and peaches
- Avoid hot, spicy, and citrus foods

PREVENT AND REDUCE MOUTH DRYNESS

- Drink more water to avoid dehydration
- Try sucking on ice pops, frozen fruit, or ice chips to help reduce dryness
- Add broth and gravy to meals to increase fluid and calorie intake

ADJUST EATING AND HYGIENE HABITS

- Cook foods until soft and tender and eat them at room temperature
- Rinse your mouth with salt water after each meal to help remove food
- Ask your health care professional or dentist how to best care for your teeth, gums, and mouth

For additional support, visit [nutritionforstrength.com](https://www.nutritionforstrength.com)



Nutrition tips to help manage taste changes and wounds



TASTE CHANGES

Cancer treatments may affect taste receptors in the mouth and alter the sense of taste and smell. Certain cancer treatments may also cause a bitter, metallic taste.

FIGHT UNWANTED TASTES WITH SPECIFIC FLAVORS

- Put sugar or sweeteners on foods to reduce bitterness
- Add salt or citrus to foods that taste too sugary
- Use tart flavors from citrus fruits and pickled foods to help reduce metallic taste

Note: If you're also experiencing mouth sores, be cautious with citrus, salt, seasonings, and sauces.

EXPLORE NEW FOODS AND FLAVORS

- Try salty foods, foods with strong flavors, and cold foods
- Eat bland foods if your sense of smell or taste is more sensitive
- Experiment with seasonings and marinades to see what you like

ADJUST HOW YOU EAT

- Cleanse your mouth with tea, ginger ale, or salt water before meals and finish with a mint or gum
- Eat foods at room temperature to reduce the taste and smell
- Eat with plastic utensils if you notice a metallic taste in your mouth



WOUNDS AND INCISIONS

Proper healing of surgical incisions and other wounds is important, especially during treatments. Cancer treatments can make it difficult to maintain good nutrition, which may slow wound healing.

GET ENOUGH PROTEIN, ARGININE, AND GLUTAMINE

- Eat protein-rich foods, like chicken, dairy products, and nutrition shakes, to help repair tissue
- Choose foods with arginine, a building block of protein that supports blood flow, like fish, chicken, and dairy products
- Eat foods with glutamine, an amino acid that stimulates collagen formation needed for healing, including eggs, beef, and milk

EAT FOODS HIGH IN VITAMINS AND MINERALS

- Add strawberries, spinach, and other foods high in vitamin C to your diet to support healing
- Try beans, nuts, whole grains, and other foods high in zinc
- Eat avocados, trout, almonds, and other foods high in vitamin E

STAY HYDRATED

- Drink 6-8 glasses of fluid each day to maintain hydration and support circulation
- Try broth-based soups
- Avoid caffeinated beverages

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