



ONCOLOGY NUTRITION

COPING WITH DRY MOUTH

Radiation therapy to the head and neck area can reduce the amount and increase the thickness of saliva. Many drugs such as those used to control pain and nausea may also add to mouth dryness temporarily.

To reduce mouth dryness:

- ◆ Rinse your mouth as often as you can with one of the following rinses. This will help remove food particles and put a “fresh” taste in your mouth.

Rinse A

¼ tsp. salt
1 cup water

Rinse B

¼ tsp. baking soda
1 cup water

Rinse C

¼ tsp. glycerin
1 cup water

Rinse D

soda water

- ◆ Carry a small bottle or spray bottle of water (or any of the above rinses) with you to help moisten your mouth during conversation.
- ◆ “Mouthwetting agents” have occasionally provided relief for mouth dryness. Ask your doctor or dentist to suggest a “mouthwetting agent” for you to try.
- ◆ Avoid over-the-counter mouthwashes as they contain alcohol and can cause further dryness.
- ◆ Avoid lemon glycerin mouth swabs.
- ◆ Avoid alcohol and tobacco that can dry your mouth.
- ◆ Try sucking on ice chips to help moisten and refresh your mouth.
- ◆ Use a humidifier at night, to help moisten the air.
- ◆ Keep a glass of water or a “mouthwetting agent” by your bedside.
- ◆ Keep your lips moist with water based gels such as: Surgi-Lube®, K-Y Jelly®, Oral Balance®, Mouth Moisturizer®

***If you are not prone to mouth sores you may also try lanolin-based or cocoa butter based lip moisturizers such as Lanolette®.

- ◆ If saliva glands are working but at low levels, these suggestions may help stimulate any saliva you have available:
 - *sugarless gum (sweetened with xylitol -- Trident®, Orbit®)
 - *sugarless candy (Sorbees®, Trident Mints®, Thayers® Dry Mouth Lozenge)
 - *ask your doctor or dentist about medications to help stimulate saliva

EATING TIPS

- ◆ Drink 8-10 cups of liquid each day. (See the liquid suggestions on the next page).
- ◆ Limit drinks containing caffeine (coffee, tea, cola drinks) as they may cause additional dryness.
- ◆ Use a straw to drink thick liquids such as liquid food supplements, milkshakes, cream soups or nectars.
- ◆ Drinks containing sugar (natural or added) should be taken *with* meals and teeth should be cleaned afterwards.
- ◆ Take 2-3 sips of liquid with each bite of food to help “wash” food down.
- ◆ Dunk or soak dry foods in liquids such as herbal tea, milk, hot cocoa, soups or broth.
- ◆ Pour sauces and gravies over vegetables, fish, chicken, meats or bread.
- ◆ Use extra butter and salad dressings in sandwiches and use crustless bread.
- ◆ Add extra liquids to stews, casseroles and simmered foods.
- ◆ Avoid sticky and sugary foods that will promote tooth decay.
Examples of foods to avoid: dried fruits, candies, chocolates, gum or mints sweetened with sugar, honey, jams, jelly, sugar coated nuts
- ◆ Be sure to clean your teeth and mouth after every meal and snack.

MEAL AND SNACK IDEAS

Breakfasts

hot or cold unsweetened cereals
eggs (scrambled, soft-boiled, poached, “Eggs Benedict”)
muffin or toast dunked in a hot beverage
buttered toast with peanut butter or cheese
French toast or pancakes with fresh fruit or fruit yogurt
muffin and yogurt drink or “breakfast shake”

Light Meals

soups or chowders (crackers can be broken into soup)
green salads (chef’s salad, spinach salad, Caesar salad, Greek salad, marinated vegetables)
pasta or potato salad
fresh fruit and cottage cheese
crustless sandwiches with mayonnaise based fillings (tuna salad, ham salad)
cream cheese, cucumber and tomato sandwich
Monte Cristo or French Dip sandwiches

Main Dishes

stews (beef or chicken, goulash, ratatouille)
pot pies or pot roasts
ground meats in casseroles (Shepherd’s pie, stroganoff)
creamed salmon or seafood on toast
omelet or souffle with cheese sauce
pasta dishes with extra sauce
“fondue” or “hot pots”
boiled or steamed vegetables with or without butter or cheese sauce
Rice and Sauce® mix

Liquids

skim or 1% MF milk based drinks
hot tea with lemon or ice tea
lemonade or seltzer waters flavoured with lemon or lime
sports drinks
diluted juices or fruit flavoured beverages

Snacks and Beverages

tomato juice
orange juice or fruit nectars
sugar-free popsicles
sugar-free candies
sugar-free or artificially sweetened lemonade or ice tea
“diet” carbonated beverages

Desserts*

fresh fruits such as melons, grapes, pears, grapefruit
canned fruits or applesauce (unsweetened)
sugar-free Jell-O® with or without whipped topping
regular or frozen yogurt, sherbets, ice milk or ice cream
mousse or fruit whip
pudding or custard
cheesecake with a fruit sauce
cream pies
cake with sauce

***these foods contain sugar,** remember to clean your teeth immediately after eating.

This information is not meant to replace the medical counsel of your doctor or individual consultation with a registered dietitian. This information may only be used in its entirety.