

Dry Mouth

Information for Patients and Carers

A dry mouth can occur as a result of cancer treatment, causing a change to saliva production, or medication you are taking. Some mouth infections can also lead to a dry mouth.

This can make chewing and swallowing more difficult and cause changes to your taste, making food and drinks less enjoyable. It can also worsen mouth soreness.

Choosing soft foods and adding a sauce to main meals or desserts can help break foods down which can make chewing and swallowing them easier.



You may find some of these tips helpful when you have a dry mouth

These suggestions can be used along with any medications for a dry mouth. If you have been prescribed mouthwash, medicine or gel you should continue to take these as prescribed.

Choose soft foods and include as part of a meal

- Macaroni cheese
- Casserole/stew
- Cottage pie
- Stovies
- Soup
- Fish – try poaching to keep it moist
- Scrambled egg
- Pasta bake
- Rice dishes
- Mashed potato
- Baked beans with skinless baked potato
- Mozzarella or cottage cheese
- Casserole/stew/curries
- Soup/broth
- Rice dishes/congee

Add a sauce, condiment or dip to foods

- Gravy
- Cheese sauce with cauliflower or fish
- Chopped tomatoes or passata with pasta or rice dishes

- Sweet and sour sauce or black bean sauce with stir fry
- Cranberry or mint sauce with meats, fish or vegetables
- Hummus, cheese and chive or sour cream and onion dips with vegetable sticks, breadsticks or soft crisps i.e skips, cheese puffs, potato sticks, quavers, chipsticks, wotsits
- Yoghurt sauce

Try tinned, skinless or well-cooked fruit or vegetables as part of a meal or snack

- Sweet potato or yam
- Carrot
- Butternut squash or turnip
- Cucumber, celery, pepper
- Broccoli or cauliflower
- Tomatoes
- Pear, peach
- Melon, mango

Choose soft desserts to have after a main meal or as a snack

- Yoghurt
- Mousse
- Rice pudding, semolina
- Trifle
- Jelly
- Rice pudding/semolina/milky puddings

Add custard, cream, ice cream or sauces to desserts

- Fruit crumble
- Sponge cake
- Cheesecake
- Tinned fruit

Sip cool fluids

Take sips of fluid between mouthfuls of food and thicker drinks, such as milk, to clear any coating left in the mouth.

Suck on foods that encourage saliva production

- Sugar-free boiled sweets
- Mints
- Sugar-free chewing gum
- Ice chips, ice cubes

Note: if you are receiving a chemotherapy medication called oxaliplatin be mindful that this can cause cold sensitivity – avoid very cold food and drinks.

Limit foods that can stick to the mouth and worsen mouth dryness

- Salt added in cooking or onto meals before eating – try herbs instead
- Pastry
- Nut butter
- Chocolate

Avoid smoking

Amongst other risks, smoking changes the way you taste and smell. It alters the blood supply to your taste buds affecting the way they work. Your taste buds can recover if you stop smoking.

For more information and support on cutting down or stopping smoking visit 'Quit Your Way Scotland' at: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/helplines/quit-your-way-scotland>

If you have a small appetite or are losing weight try some of these tips to increase your energy and protein intake:

Choose smaller portions

Eat and drink smaller portions. Use a side plate for your meals; you may find this more appealing.

Snack regularly throughout the day

Eat and drink every 2-3 hours to help you get the nourishment that you need. A drink high in calories or a milky pudding can count as a snack.

Choose full-fat varieties and avoid low-fat or reduced-fat products

Thick and creamy yoghurt
Custard
Rice pudding
Mousse
Mayonnaise
Milk

Add a sauce high in calories to main meals or desserts

Cheese sauce or cream cheese
Coconut milk to curries or stir fries
Tartar sauce or Caesar dressing
Honey, jam
Apple sauce
Ice cream, double cream, crème fraiche, custard

Choose drinks high in calories

Milkshake or smoothie
Hot chocolate (made with full-cream milk and topped with cream and marshmallows)
Malted drink or milky coffee
Glass of milk or lassi
Fruit juice – dilute with water if the acidity worsens your symptoms
Glass of milk/lassi/sweetened soya milk
Milky tea/coffee or bubble tea