



## Sore Mouth

Information for Patients and Carers

A sore mouth or throat can be caused by cancer, cancer treatments or medications you are taking. Some mouth infections can also lead to a sore mouth.

This can make chewing and swallowing more difficult. A dry mouth and some food and drinks can irritate an already sore mouth or throat.

You may find some of these tips helpful when you have a sore mouth. Choose soft foods, add a sauce to main meals and desserts and choose drinks high in calories.

This can help to break down foods which can make chewing and swallowing more tolerable and help you take in the nourishment that your body needs.

Cool foods may feel refreshing however extremes of temperatures may irritate the lining of your mouth so you may choose to avoid very hot or very cold foods and drinks.

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

### You may find some of these tips helpful with a sore mouth

Avoid rough textures and limit known irritants	Choose soft foods more easily broken down
Tough meats including steak and lamb	Minced meats Fish Stew or casserole Pasta or rice dishes Macaroni or cauliflower cheese Eggs Beans, pulses and lentils Cottage pie or stovies Soup
Crunchy crisps, nuts and seed, pretzels	Corn-based crisps such as; quavers, wotsits, skips
Roast or fried potatoes	Boiled or mashed potatoes, skinless baked potatoes, pasta or rice
Raw vegetables	Try tinned, skinless or well cooked vegetables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweet potato or yam</li> <li>• Carrot</li> <li>• Butternut squash or turnip</li> <li>• Cucumber</li> <li>• Broccoli or cauliflower</li> <li>• Pepper</li> </ul>

Avoid rough textures and limit known irritants	Choose soft foods more easily broken down
Crunchy biscuits	Dip biscuits into tea or coffee to soften, choose shortbread or mallow cake
Oatcakes	Cream crackers with cream cheese, spread or dip
Pastries	Pancake, sponge cake, croissant, scone
Fruit tart	Yoghurt, mousse, ice cream, ice cream sundae, custard, rice pudding, trifle, semolina, milk jelly
Spicy foods and flavours such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curry powder or curry</li> <li>• Chilli pepper or chilli powder</li> <li>• Paprika, cumin, turmeric</li> <li>• Horseradish</li> </ul>	Herbs and sauces to flavour foods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oregano</li> <li>• Basil</li> <li>• Parsley</li> <li>• Honey</li> <li>• Cheese sauce or Greek yoghurt</li> </ul>
Vinegar, salt Citrus and acidic foods and flavours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lemon</li> <li>• Lime</li> <li>• Grapefruit</li> <li>• Orange</li> <li>• Pineapple</li> <li>• Tomatoes</li> </ul>	Mayonnaise, salad cream Soft or ripened, skinless fruits with yoghurt or custard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Banana</li> <li>• Stewed pear or apple</li> <li>• Peach</li> </ul> <p>Add custard or yoghurt to fruit as the acidity can worsen a sore mouth</p>
Citrus juices and carbonated or fizzy drinks	Try blending yoghurt, ice cream or double cream with soft fruit to make a smoothie, diluting juice, non-carbonated drinks, milk or milkshakes.

### Add a sauce, condiment or dip to foods

- Gravy
- Cheese sauce with cauliflower or fish
- Hummus, mayonnaise or guacamole with soft vegetable sticks, breadsticks or soft crisps i.e skips, cheese puffs, potato sticks, quavers, chipsticks, wotsits

### Add custard, cream, ice cream or sauces to desserts

- Fruit crumble
- Sponge cake
- Cheesecake
- Tinned fruit

### Limit salty, acidic and spicy foods

These can also irritate a sore mouth. If you do wish to try them have them with mayonnaise, crème fraiche, yoghurt or custard.

### Keep your mouth clean

Sip water between mouthfuls of food and thicker drinks, such as milk, to clear any coating left in the mouth. You could use a beaker or a straw. Use a soft toothbrush and take care brushing if you have ulceration.

### Avoid smoking and limit alcohol

These are known irritants and can make a sore mouth worse.

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>

For advice on limiting your alcohol intake visit 'Drink Aware' at: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>

## 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

- Milk, yoghurt, mayonnaise

### Add a high-calorie topping to toast, pancake, scone, buns, malt loaf or croissant

- Try honey, chocolate spread, nut butter, jam, mashed banana/avocado or cream cheese.

### Choose drinks high in calorie

- Milkshake, smoothie or kefir
- Hot chocolate (made with full-cream milk and topped with cream and marshmallows)
- Malted drink or milky coffee
- Glass of milk
- Fruit juice – dilute with water if the acidity worsens symptoms



These suggestions can be used along with medications for a sore mouth. Continue to take any medication as prescribed. Consider taking pain relief 30 minutes before a meal or a snack to give your medication time to work before you eat or drink.

Check your mouth regularly and let your doctor, pharmacist or specialist nurse know if you have mouth ulcers or any problems with your mouth. They can give you mouthwash, medicine or gel to heal ulcers, clear or prevent any infection and relieve pain.