

Radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and several cancer medications can cause mouth sores, ulcers, and tender gums. All can cause your mouth, throat, and tongue to feel sore, raw, or dry and may lead to dehydration, poor eating, and weight loss. The following tips and recommendations may help you to better manage your sore mouth, throat, and tongue.

- **Choose soft, bland foods.**
 - Softer foods will be easier to chew and swallow.
 - Soups and stews are good options, as long as meats are soft and tender.
 - Try breakfast foods like instant oatmeal, grits, pancakes, waffles, and cold cereal that has been softened in milk.
 - Pick side dishes like cottage or ricotta cheese, macaroni and cheese, mashed white or sweet potatoes, and rice or risotto.
 - Try desserts like custard, tapioca pudding, ice cream, milkshakes, and sherbet.
 - Choose snacks like applesauce, gelatin, smoothies, and yogurt.
- **Prepare foods in ways that make them easier to eat.**
 - Cut foods into small pieces. You may consider using a blender or food processor to puree foods.
 - Cook foods until they are soft and tender.
 - Serve foods with gravy, broths, or sauces.
 - Choose soft or canned fruits or applesauce instead of raw fruits with tough skins.
- **Avoid foods and drinks that make mouth sores worse.**
 - Avoid citrus fruits and juices, salty or spicy foods, and acidic foods like tomatoes.
 - Do not drink carbonated or caffeinated drinks.
 - Refrain from having beer, wine, liquor, or any other type of alcohol.
- **Avoid very hot foods.**
 - Hot foods can cause mouth and throat discomfort.

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- Choose room temperature or cold foods that are soothing.
- Allow soups and hot foods to cool to room temperature before serving.
- Try freezing fruits, and suck on frozen fruit pops, fruit ices, or ice chips.

- **Choose foods that are good sources of protein to combat weight loss.**
 - Aim to have a good source of protein with meals and snacks.
 - Ground meats, eggs, cottage cheese, yogurt, custard, beans, lentils, and smoothies are good soft food choices that also provide protein.
 - Eat small, frequent meals. You may find it easier to eat smaller amounts at a time.

- **Drink at least 8-10 eight-ounce glasses of water each day.**
 - Drink liquids with your meals as this will make it easier to swallow foods.
 - Sip cool drinks in between your meals.
 - Drink with a straw. This can help push the foods past the painful sores in your mouth.
 - Avoid caffeinated or/and carbonated beverages.
 - Avoid alcohol. Alcohol can irritate the mouth.

- **Use good mouth care.**
 - Rinse your mouth several times a day. Mix one quart water and one tablespoon baking soda to make a rinse that removes food and promotes healing.
 - Do not use a mouthwash that has alcohol. Alcohol makes a sore mouth worse.
 - Use a toothbrush with soft bristles.
 - Remove dentures (except during eating) if your gums are sore. Keep dentures clean.
 - Avoid cigarettes, cigars, and tobacco products.
 - Ask your doctor about special mouthwashes and sprays that can numb the mouth and throat.
 - Tell your doctor if your gums are bleeding or if you have white patches in your mouth. Both can be signs of infection.

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What food should I eat when my mouth, throat, or tongue is sore?*

High Proteins

- Soft, bland, ground or pureed meats, poultry, and fish
 - Hamburger
 - Chicken salad
 - Tuna salad
- Casseroles
 - Chicken and rice
 - Macaroni and cheese
 - Tuna noodle casserole
 - Egg, cheese, and bean dishes. Hard boiled or scrambled eggs.
 - Mashed beans with cheese
- Dairy Products
 - Milk
 - Yogurt (Plain or vanilla)
 - Custard
 - Milkshakes
- Creamed soups and stews
- Peanut butter, creamy
- Liquid nutrition supplements

Breads, Cereals, Rice, and Pasta

- Soft, moistened breads
- Cooked cereals
 - Instant oatmeal
 - Instant grits
 - Creamed wheat
 - Creamed rice
- Cold cereals soaked in milk
- Pasta and rice in sauce

Fruits and Vegetables

- Soft, cooked or pureed fruits
 - Bananas
 - Applesauce
 - Watermelon
 - Canned fruits
 - Baby food
- Soft or cooked vegetables
 - Pureed or mashed vegetables
 - Mashed potatoes
 - Soups and stews

Drinks, Desserts, and Other Foods

- Non-acidic juices and fruit nectars
 - Apple juice
 - Pear nectar
- Decaffeinated coffee and tea
- Plain or vanilla pudding
- Cake, cookies and pie soaked in milk
- Gelatin
- Butter, vegetable oils, cream cheese, and sour cream
- Ice cream, sherbet
- Popsicles

*Adapted from Eldridge B, and Hamilton KK, Editors, Management of Nutrition Impact Symptoms in Cancer and Educational Handouts. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association; 2004.

What foods should I avoid when my mouth, throat, or tongue is sore?*

High Proteins

- Spicy foods
 - Spaghetti
 - Tacos
 - Curry dishes
 - Chili
- Tough, dry meats, poultry, or fish
- Dry meats

Breads, cereals, rice and pasta

- Dry/tough breads
 - Dry crackers
 - Crusty breads/rolls
 - English muffins
 - Bagels
- Salted breads

Fruits and Vegetables

- Citrus or acidic fruit
 - Oranges
 - Lemons
 - Limes
 - Pineapple
- Raw vegetables or fruits with tough skins
- Pickled fruits and vegetables
- Tomato products
 - Raw or cooked tomatoes
 - Ketchup
 - Marinara sauce

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- Tomato juice

Drinks, desserts, and other foods

- Citrus juices
 - Grapefruit
 - Orange
 - Lemon and lime
- Tomato juice
- Caffeinated drinks
- Carbonated drinks
- Alcohol
- Chocolate desserts
- Pickles
- Crunchy/sharp foods
 - Potato chips
 - Pretzels
 - Popcorn
 - Chips
- Vinegar
- Spicy condiments
 - Pepper
 - Pepper sauces
 - Chili powder
 - Cloves and nutmeg
 - Horseradish
 - Salsa

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