



# Tips For Those Experiencing Dry Mouth or Thick Saliva

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Nutrition is very important during cancer treatment. Consuming enough calories and protein in your diet will help your body maintain strength and energy levels, fight infections, recover faster, and improve your tolerance to treatment.

Unfortunately, cancer treatment can cause side effects that may affect your ability to do so. For example, a low appetite, fatigue, dry mouth, and pain can make preparing meals or finding foods you enjoy eating difficult. Follow the tips below to help alleviate dry mouth and thick saliva, and provide your body with the nutrition it needs during treatment.

## Drink plenty of fluids

- Aim to drink 8 to 12 cups of fluid/day to help loosen mucus
- Sip on fluids frequently
  - Especially during conversation and after each bite of food
- Use a straw to drink liquids



## Avoid

- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Tobacco or smoking
- Alcohol-containing mouthwashes
- Hot, spicy, salty, or acidic foods if they cause irritation
- Sticky and sugary foods to prevent tooth decay
- Sugary beverages
- Dry, coarse, or rough foods
- Salting your foods
  - Salt can worsen dry mouth
  - Consume <math>< 2,300</math> mg of sodium/salt per day
  - Read the Nutrition Facts label on packaged food items to see how much sodium is in one serving



## Try

- Sucking on sugar-free hard candy, frozen grapes, sugar-free popsicles, or ice chips throughout the day
- Chewing on carrots, celery, or sugar-free gum
- Taking small bites and chewing your food well



## Try

- Softer foods that are easier to chew and swallow
  - Soups, stews, casseroles, scrambled eggs, tofu, mashed potatoes, yogurt, pudding, hot cereals
  - Liquid nutrition supplements
    - Boost or Ensure, protein powders
- Using a cool-mist humidifier to help moisten the air
  - Keep one next to your bed to use while you sleep at night
  - Be sure to clean it regularly to avoid the spread of bacteria and mold
- Breathing through your nose instead of breathing through your mouth
- Applying water-soluble, lanolin, or oil-based lubricants to your lips to keep them moist and prevent them from cracking



## Add moisture to your foods

- Immerse your meats in a liquid marinade like juice or salad dressing
- Add sauces and condiments to your foods
  - Barbecue sauce, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, salad dressings
  - Pesto, marinara sauce, tomato sauce, alfredo sauce, soy sauce, coconut aminos, peanut sauce, teriyaki sauce, chipotle sauce, cilantro lime crema, etc.
- Add oils, broth, gravy, butter, and margarine to vegetables, meats, poultry, fish, bread, sandwiches, etc.
- Use moisturizing cooking/preparation methods
  - Stewing
  - Braising
  - Slow-cooking



## Practice good oral hygiene

- Brush your teeth and tongue using a soft toothbrush at least twice a day
- Make sure to angle the bristles toward your gumline to clean between your gums and teeth
- Brush gently in small circular motions instead of scrubbing hard in back-and-forth motions
- Use a non-abrasive, fluoride toothpaste without a strong taste - flavoring ingredients may cause irritation
- Use an alcohol-free mouthwash such as Biotene Alcohol-Free
- Rinse your mouth out before and after eating and before bed, or every 2 hours with a salt water and baking soda mixture
- 1 cup (500 mL) warm water, 1 tsp baking soda, 1 tsp salt



## Communicate with your healthcare team

- Keep open communication with your healthcare team about your symptoms. Ask them about the use of oral moisturizers and saliva substitutes
- Consult with your healthcare provider before using any oral products



**Disclaimer:** Please note that the information provided herein is intended to serve as a general guideline and may not meet the unique nutritional needs of individual patients. The distribution of these materials is at the discretion of the physician. The creator does not hold responsibility for their application or outcomes on individual health conditions. All patients are advised to consult with their physician for personalized advice tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.