

Marion L. Shepard Cancer Center
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Mouth Sores

Did you know?

- The cells that line your mouth and throat are rapidly dividing cells and are subject to damage from chemotherapy and radiation therapy. This damage can cause inflammation, dryness, and sores in your mouth and throat called **mucositis**.
- Another side effect of radiation is chronic dry mouth called **xerostomia**. Xerostomia is the result of damage to the salivary glands and can make it difficult to talk, chew, or swallow.

Symptoms of mouth sores:

- A burning sensation followed by ulcers or sores.
- A red, dry, and irritated mouth and throat.
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing.
- Weak, hoarse, or different sounding voice.
- Thick saliva
- White patches on tongue or cheeks in mouth

What to eat and drink:

- Use a straw to drink liquid and take small bites and chew food completely.
- Soften food with milk, broth, gravy, juice, yogurt, butter, jelly or other liquid if needed. Use a blender to mash or blend fruits and vegetables.
- If cold feels good, suck on ice chips.
- Drink 8-10 large glasses of caffeine-free liquid each day. Keep a water bottle with you at all times, especially when you leave home. Sip this slowly throughout the day.
- Try to eat at times of the day when mouth pain is less intense. Try swishing and gargling with warm water to moisten your mouth before eating.
- For thick saliva, try sipping 100% papaya juice which contains natural substances that can thin saliva.
- Try high-calorie liquids and semi-soft foods, such as fruit smoothies or shakes, warm soup, pasta, etc.
- Avoid spicy, salty, or citrus foods that can irritate a sore mouth.
- Avoid tobacco products and alcoholic beverages.

How to treat:

- Start using Magic Mouthwash 5-10 cc swish and swallow 30 minutes before meals and at bedtime. Avoid commercial mouthwashes that contain alcohol, which can be drying.
- Rinse with warm saline solution mouth rinses.
- Keep mouth and lips moist by using lip balm.
- Brush you teeth with a soft toothbrush or toothette after each meal.

When to call the nurse:

- If you continue to have sore mouth or throat while following the above instructions, call the nurse.
- Call the nurse if you are having difficulty eating and drinking while following the above instructions.