

## 4

### DRY MOUTH & CHANGES IN TASTE AND SMELL

Dry mouth can be caused by certain medications, radiation treatment for head and neck cancer, or not drinking enough. Staying hydrated can help prevent dry mouth and taste changes.

Try to drink at least 2 litres of hydrating fluids daily unless told otherwise by your doctor. Carry a water bottle with you to stay hydrated.

#### To combat a dry mouth you can:

- Add lemon or lime to your water (if you don't have mouth or throat sores).
- Eat paw-paw.
- Chew on sugar-free gum in between meals.
- Moisten foods with sauces and gravies.
- Avoid alcohol and fizzy drinks.
- Apply lip balm or petroleum jelly to protect your lips.
- Foods may taste or smell different every day. You may find it helpful to keep trying different foods to find what appeals to you.

#### If everything tastes bland or has no taste:

- Add stronger flavours to foods. If you don't have mouth or throat sores, pickles, condiments, sauces, dressings, vinegar or citrus juices may help.
- Add spices and seasonings to enhance the flavour of your food.
- Marinate meats for a stronger flavour.
- Suck on sugar-free sweets before or after a meal.

#### If everything tastes metallic or bitter:

- Choose other protein sources (such as fish, chicken or beans) if red meat tastes like metal.
- Use plastic utensils instead of metal utensils.
- Add sweeteners such as honey or syrup onto foods to offset the bitter taste.

Try rinsing your mouth out before and after meals with a homemade baking soda rinse. Swish and spit. DO NOT SWALLOW. Prepare a new batch each day. You can make this by combining:

½ tsp salt  
1 tsp baking soda  
and 1 litre of water



## 5

### WEIGHT LOSS OR WEIGHT GAIN

It is important to prevent weight loss during head and neck cancer treatment. To prevent weight loss and add calories to your diet:

- Aim to eat 5-6 small meals daily, instead of 3 big meals.
- Add these high-calorie foods to your diet and eat regularly:

- Avocado
- Olive oil or butter
- Nuts and seeds
- Cheese
- Sauces and gravies
- Peanut butter, almond butter or other nut butters
- Dried fruit

• You can add high-calorie smoothies or nutritional drinks to your diet.

• Include high-protein foods to help your body heal and prevent further muscle mass loss. Examples of high-protein foods include:

- Nuts and peanut butter
- Beans, seeds and dried fruit
- Meat, fish and chicken
- Eggs
- Dairy products like, yoghurt, mageu/maas, cottage cheese, ice cream

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MORE?

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# #ASK YOUR DOCTOR

RIGHT TREATMENT. RIGHT TIME.

#### HOW TO MANAGE SIDE EFFECTS

Learning more about the potential side effects of treatment can help you take an active role in planning your cancer treatment and care.

## SIDE EFFECTS OF #HEADANDNECKCANCER TREATMENT

### 1

#### MOUTH SORES AND MOUTH PAIN

### 2

#### FEELING TIRED

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#### DIARRHOEA AND/OR CONSTIPATION

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#### DRY MOUTH & CHANGES IN TASTE AND SMELL

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#### WEIGHT LOSS OR WEIGHT GAIN



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## 1

### MOUTH SORES AND MOUTH PAIN

**Mouth sores and mouth pain can occur before, during and after treatment. Choose foods that help soothe the mouth, including:**

- ➡ Cold foods, such as ice lollies, frozen fruit and ice cream.
- ➡ Soft, mild foods, such as cottage cheese, smoothies, protein shakes, yoghurt and mageu/maas.
- ➡ Well-cooked, soft meals, such as potatoes, macaroni and cheese, stews and mince.

**Avoid foods that could irritate the mouth, including:**

- ➡ Acidic or spicy foods, such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, peppers, chillies, peri-peri, vinegar and atchar.
- ➡ Crunchy or hard foods, such as crusty bread, dry rusks and chips.
- ➡ Hot foods. Choose room temperature or cold instead.
- ➡ Alcohol and fizzy drinks.



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## 2

### FEELING TIRED

➡ Discuss with your cancer care team about feeling tired. If there is a medical cause, there may be treatment for it.

➡ Prioritise your activities; do the most important ones when you have the most energy.

➡ Get regular exercise, if you can. Even short walks. Research tells us that being moderately active can help decrease cancer-related fatigue.

➡ Make sure you get enough rest. Take a few short breaks during the day instead of one long rest.

➡ Manage your stress.

➡ Try frequently eating protein, fat and fibre with each meal. Eat snacks to help keep blood sugar levels more stable. This will give you a more sustained feeling of energy.

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## 3

### DIARRHOEA AND/OR CONSTIPATION

**Diarrhoea is when you have frequent, loose, watery bowel movements. It can also come along with stomach pain or cramping.**

**It is important to try and drink liquids to stay hydrated. Becoming dehydrated is very dangerous.**

➡ **Foods to AVOID:**

- Raw vegetables, nuts and whole grains
- Dairy foods
- Foods that are high in sugar, such as juices or sweets
- Greasy and fried foods
- Alcohol and fizzy drinks

➡ **Foods to EAT:**

- Soups
- Apples or applesauce
- Bananas
- White rice or pasta
- Oatmeal
- Plain potatoes without the skin
- Baked chicken or fish
- Canned fruit (in juice)

**Constipation is when you have trouble having a regular bowel movement.**

➡ **Increase foods that are:**

- High in fibre, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and beans.
- Try prunes and other dried fruits and juices.
- Drink hot beverages, such as herbal tea and decaffeinated coffee.

➡ **Make sure you:**

- Drink enough water.
- Move more if you are able – walk or stretch.
- Discuss with your health care team about medications or other tips that can help with constipation.



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