

We have compiled cancer information from some of our most trusted sources. This article on mouth and throat changes is from **National Cancer Institute** and addresses the concerns patients may feel during or after chemotherapy.

Mouth and Throat Changes

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Trouble eating or swallowing
- Painful spots or sores in your mouth
- Sores on your lips or in your mouth

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Changes in taste or smell
- Dry mouth (little or no saliva)
- Pain when you eat hot or cold foods

Take these steps:

- Clean your mouth with care.
- Brush your teeth and tongue after each meal and before you go to bed. Use a very soft toothbrush or cotton swabs.
- Use toothpaste or gel that has fluoride in it.
- Rinse your mouth with the baking soda, salt, and water mix below.

Every 3 hours during the day, mix together:

- 1 cup warm water
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/8 teaspoon salt.

Take small sips and swish them around in your mouth. Then rinse with plain water.

Keep your mouth and lips moist.

- Use a lip balm.
- Sip water or suck ice chips.
- Try drinking through a straw.

Eat soft, bland foods.

- Choose foods that are soft, wet, and easy to swallow. When your mouth is sore, try cooked cereals, mashed potatoes, and scrambled eggs.
- Soften food with gravy, sauce, or other liquids.
- Let food cool down if hot food hurts your mouth.

Ask for pain medicine if your mouth or throat is sore.

Don't have things that can make your mouth hurt.

- Don't drink orange, lemon, tomato, or grapefruit juice.
- Don't drink alcohol, such as beer or wine.
- Don't eat crunchy or spicy foods.
- Don't have foods or drinks that have sugar in them, such as candy and soft drinks.
- Don't smoke cigarettes or use other tobacco products.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What foods and drinks should I have?
3. Can we make the baking soda, salt, and water mix together?
4. What kind of toothpaste is best for me?
5. If brushing hurts, what are other ways that I can clean my mouth?
6. What medicines can help?

Visit a dentist at least 2 weeks before you start treatment. Get all of your dental work done before you start chemotherapy, if at all possible. Get a copy of the report from your dentist and give it to your doctor or nurse.

Source: <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/mouth-and-throat.pdf>