

## Sore Mouth or Throat

Mouth sores, tender gums, and a sore throat or esophagus often result from radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or infection. If you have a sore mouth or gums, see your doctor to be sure the soreness is a treatment side effect and not an unrelated dental problem. The doctor may be able to give you medicine that will control mouth and throat pain. Your dentist also can give you tips for the care of your mouth. Certain foods will irritate an already tender mouth and make chewing and swallowing difficult. By carefully choosing the foods you eat and by taking good care of your mouth, teeth, and gums, you can usually make eating easier. Here are some suggestions that may help:

Try soft foods that are easy to chew and swallow, such as:

- milkshakes
- bananas, applesauce, and other soft fruits
- peach, pear, and apricot nectars
- watermelon
- cottage cheese, yogurt
- mashed potatoes, noodles
- macaroni and cheese
- custards, puddings, and gelatin
- scrambled eggs
- oatmeal or other cooked cereals
- pureed or mashed vegetables, such as peas and carrots
- pureed meats

Avoid foods or liquids that can irritate your mouth. These include:

- oranges, grapefruits, lemons, or other citrus fruit or juice
- tomato sauces or juice
- spicy or salty foods
- raw vegetables, granola, toast, crackers, or other rough, coarse, or dry foods
- commercial mouthwashes that contain alcohol
- Cook foods until they are soft and tender.
- Cut foods into small pieces.
- Use a blender or food processor to puree your food.
- Mix food with butter, margarine, thin gravy, or sauce to make it easier to swallow.
- Use a straw to drink liquids.
- Use a smaller-than-usual spoon, such as a baby spoon.
- Try foods cold or at room temperature. Hot foods can irritate a tender mouth and throat.
- Try drinking warm bouillon or salty broth; it can soothe throat pain.
- Try sucking on ice chips.
- If swallowing is hard, tilting your head back or moving it forward may help.
- If your teeth and gums are sore, your dentist may be able to recommend a special product for cleaning your teeth.
- Rinse your mouth often with water to remove food and bacteria and to promote healing.

Ask your doctor about anesthetic lozenges and sprays that can numb your mouth and throat long enough for you to eat meals.