

# What To Do

## When Your Mouth or Throat Hurts



“It was hard for me to eat and swallow. So I began to eat softer foods and check my mouth each day. I also took pain medicine from my doctor.”

### Take good care of your mouth.

#### Before treatment:

- Visit a dentist at least 2 weeks before your first treatment. Tell the dentist that you will be having radiation therapy.

#### During treatment:

- Check inside your mouth every day and look for any changes.
- Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue gently with a soft, clean toothbrush.
- Brush after each meal and before bedtime.
- Sip water or suck on ice chips to keep your mouth and throat wet.

#### Every 1 to 2 hours during the day:

- Rinse your mouth with a mixture of 1 cup warm water,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon baking soda, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon salt. Swish the mixture around in your mouth, and then spit it out.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to write down any other mouth rinses that you should use.



**Tell your doctor or nurse if you notice any changes in your mouth or throat.**

## Tips to make eating more comfortable:

### This can help:

- Mash food or cut it into small pieces.
- Add gravy or broth to make other foods wet and soft.
- Drink through a straw if that helps.
- Eat foods warm—not too hot.
- Eat soft foods, such as cooked cereals, macaroni, mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, and yogurt.
- Use a blender to make milkshakes or blend your food.

### Stay away from these:

- **Don't** drink alcohol or sour juices.
- **Don't** eat foods that are spicy, salty, or have a lot of sugar. Hard, sharp foods such as chips can also make your mouth hurt.
- **Don't** use tobacco—no cigarettes, pipes, cigars, or chewing tobacco.

## Tips to help with pain or burning in your throat:

- Sit upright and bend your head forward a little when you are eating or drinking.
- Sit or stand up for at least 30 minutes after eating.

**Tell your doctor or nurse if you have trouble swallowing, feel like you are choking, or cough while you are eating or drinking.**



## Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What mouth or throat problems should I call you about?
2. Can you show me how to make a mouth rinse?
3. What medicine can I take to help stop the pain?

## Free Services To Learn More

### National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237  
(1-800-4-CANCER)

TTY: 1-800-332-8615

Online: [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

Chat Online: [www.cancer.gov/help](http://www.cancer.gov/help)



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