

Let's Talk About...

Mouth and Throat Sores

Radiation therapy, anti-cancer drugs, or infections can cause painful mouth and throat sores. Mouth and throat sores can make eating difficult. Certain foods will irritate an already sore mouth. This makes chewing and swallowing painful.

What will help mouth sores?

Your healthcare provider can give your child medication to help with pain and healing. You can make eating easier for your child by choosing soft, moist foods and taking good care of your child's mouth.

How can I help my child eat?

Try the following if your child has a sore mouth:

- Feed your child soft foods that are easy to swallow, such as:
 - Ice cream
 - Milkshakes or nutritional drinks like Pediasure™ or instant breakfast
 - Soft fruit (such as bananas or applesauce)
 - Cottage cheese
 - Custards, puddings, and gelatins
 - Puréed vegetables
 - Liquids
- Feed your child soft, moist foods that are cool or at room temperature. Warm and hot foods may irritate a sore mouth and throat.
- Cook foods until they are soft and tender.
- Blend fruits, vegetables, and other foods in a blender.
- Moisten and soften foods by adding broth, sauces, gravy, or soup.
- Cut food into small pieces so your child can chew food completely.
- Have your child use a straw.

Are there foods my child should avoid?

Some foods may irritate a sore mouth, including:

- Foods with caffeine, like soda and chocolate
- Dry foods like breads, pretzels, chips, and crackers
- Spicy or salty foods like potato chips
- Citrus fruit or juices such as orange, grapefruit, or tangerine

How should I care for my child's mouth?

A sore mouth can increase the risk of cavities and mouth infections. Keeping your child's mouth clean can help the sores heal and prevent infection. Have your child:

- **Brush their teeth at least twice daily.** If brushing causes pain or bleeding, use a soft sponge instead.
- **Rinse out their mouth after meals and snacks.**
- **Visit the dentist for regular dental care before, during, and after cancer treatment.** Ask your doctor if your child needs antibiotics before getting dental care.
- **Avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol,** which may irritate mouth sores. If your child's teeth and gums are sore, the dentist may be able to recommend a special product to clean the teeth.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if your child:

- Has mouth sores that prevent them from eating
- Has mouth sores that won't heal
- Is on pain medication that doesn't help
- Loses a lot of weight in 1 week because their mouth sores keep them from eating

Questions for my doctor

Notes

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