



PATIENT INFORMATION

SORE OR DRY MOUTH



Ulcers, sores, infection, or radiotherapy reaction can all cause pain and discomfort in the mouth.

Radiotherapy especially in the head and neck area or a side effect of some drugs can cause dryness of the mouth and can be made worse by infection such as oral thrush or by problem with your teeth or denture. Any damage is usually temporary and most side effects disappear gradually when treatment ends.

If your mouth is sore you can try:

- Eating foods served at moderate temperatures rather than extremes. Foods that are too hot or too cold can be painful. Ensure you heat food to recommended temperature then let cool. Aim for taking food little and often and snacks every 2-3 hours.
- Eating soft, moist foods and adding sauces, gravy, custards, butter, cream, etc.
- Adding sugar to tone down acid foods.
- Using a straw to make drinking easier. Sips of drink with a meal can help to moisten your food.
- Liquidizing or blending your meals to make them easier to swallow. Meat should be well cooked and tender by stewing, casseroling etc.
- Ice cream, jelly, sorbet, instant deserts, milky puddings, yogurts and custards make good puddings.
- Fortified milky drinks between meals can be soothing to the mouth and improve nutritional intake
- Limiting spicy, acidic and salty foods when you have open mouth sores.
- Avoiding dry foods with rough edges e.g. toast, raw vegetables, biscuits or crisps. Or the food needs lots of chewing and difficult to swallow.
- Very hot or cold drinks may irritate a sore mouth. Drinks that are luke warm or at room temperature are more soothing.
- Mouth hygiene is extremely important. Regular mouthwashes can be helpful. Ask your doctor or clinic staff about appropriate products.

If your mouth is very dry you can try:

- Drinking frequently during the day especially water.
- Taking sips of nourishing drinks will help improve your nutritional status. You may find fizzy drinks the most refreshing.
- Tart foods such as lemon juice, grapefruit or pineapple, which may stimulate saliva, but you need to avoid these type of food if you have sore mouth.
- Sucking crushed ice, ice cubes or iced lollies. Try making some with fruit juice or milkshakes, as well as water.

Tips to help a dry mouth

Radiotherapy to Head & Neck area, some chemotherapy and pain killers can all lead to a dry mouth which can lead to increase risk of infection and tooth decay.

- You may find some foods can be sticky in your mouth and can be difficult to swallow. These include pastry, chocolate, fresh white bread, and mashed potatoes.
- Sucking boiled sweets, chewing gum, pastel and mints may help. This may increase saliva production and will increase your energy intake.
- Keep your food moist by adding sauces and gravies.
- Ensure good oral hygiene.
- You can ask your doctor or specialist nurse about artificial saliva spray preparations or moisturizing gels, mouth wash or lozenges which are available on prescription. Try using an atomizer spray with cold water to keep your mouth moist.
- Use lip balm or water based cream (aqueous or aqua gel) for dry lips

Do not suffer in silence. As soon as you develop symptoms of a sore or dry mouth contact your doctor, Clinic Nurse Specialist or Radiotherapy Team for advice.

For Information on appropriate products available to help relieve the symptoms caused by sore/dry mouth please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist or GP.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

Covering the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch, Worcestershire Royal Hospital and Kidderminster Hospital

Tel: 01905 760 136

Email: wah-tr.dietetics@nhs.net

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Nutrition and Dietetic Department
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If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.