

Nutrition and Dietetics

Diet and cancer care - dry mouth

This information is part of a series of suggestions for adults to help relieve the symptoms caused by cancer or its treatment and enable you to eat.

A dry mouth (xerostomia) can be caused by your treatment, medications or by not drinking enough fluid. Your teeth will be more vulnerable to erosion and caries

- **Pay particular attention to oral hygiene: your nurse, doctor or dentist can provide you with mouth care advice.**
- Drink plenty of fluids, aim for at least 1½ -2 litres (3 pints) each day unless your doctor has told you otherwise.
- Take regular sips of water during the day. Try carrying a small bottle of water with you.
- Try sugar free chewing gum to stimulate your saliva. Keep foods moist by adding extra sauces such as gravy or a milk-based sauce to savoury foods and custard or cream to puddings.
- Biscuits, bread and other dry foods can be made softer by dipping in fluids like milk, soups and tea.
- You may find some foods are stickier in your mouth and can be difficult to swallow. These include pastry, chocolate, fresh white bread, and mashed potato
- Avoid hard, rough foods and spicy foods which may irritate your mouth
- Avoid having sugary foods and drinks. If you eat sweet foods and drinks, try to have at mealtimes rather than on their own.



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- Acidic foods and drinks such as fruit, juices, and fizzy drinks (including diet versions) can increase tooth decay. Try not to have these between your meals.
- If your lips are dry, use lip balms or water-based cream (aqueous, aqua gel) to keep them moist. Do not use petroleum jelly such as Vaseline or any chemists' own brand
- If your dry mouth does not improve and remains uncomfortable, speak with your doctor who may prescribe a pH neutral artificial saliva gel or spray.
- If you are struggling to eat and you are losing weight, please ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a dietitian.

Local dietetic department contact details:

Coventry Dietitians	024 7696 6161
Nuneaton Dietitians	024 7686 5098
Redditch and Bromsgrove Dietitians	01527 512043
Warwick Dietitians	01926 495321 extension 4258

Further information on diet and cancer is also available from:

Macmillan Cancer Support	www.macmillan.org.uk
World Cancer Research Fund	www.wcrf-uk.org

This information has been produced by Coventry Macmillan Dietitians, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the department on 024 7696 6161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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