

dry mouth

Cancer

Certain cancer treatments can cause dry mouth, or “cotton mouth”. Dry mouth occurs when your body makes less spit, or saliva, than it should. When you have dry mouth, it can be more difficult to talk, chew and swallow food. The taste of foods may also change with dry mouth. See below for ways you can manage this side effect with nutrition.

Managing with Nutrition:

- Moisten foods with sauces, gravies, or dressings to make them easier to swallow.
- Season foods with citrus juices and herbs instead of salt.
- Choose foods that are easy to swallow. Try pureed foods, puddings, sorbets or soups.
- Suck on hard candies, frozen fruit or popsicles. These help your mouth make more saliva.
- Chew gum. Choose a sugar-free gum to prevent cavities. Some ingredients in sugar-free products, like the sugar alcohols xylitol, sorbitol, mannitol and erythritol, may cause gas, bloating or diarrhea. Check with your dietitian about better options.
- Eat tart foods or drinks (ex: lemonade). Tart foods and beverages encourage your mouth to make more saliva. Avoid if you have a sore mouth or throat.
- Sip water often to moisten mouth.
- Eat papaya or pineapple. Certain enzymes in papaya (papain) and pineapple (amylase) may help break up “ropy” or thick saliva.

Avoid:

- Alcohol-containing mouthwashes
- Tobacco products
- Alcohol
- Dry, coarse or rough foods

Additional Tips:

- Cut food into small pieces.
- Use lip balm to keep lips moist.
- Always carry a bottle of water for easy access.
- Rinse mouth every 1-2 hours with a warm water rinse, such as $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp baking soda and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp salt mixed into 1 cup warm water. Follow with a plain water rinse.