

Oncology Tips



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Safe Food-Handling Tips

- Wash your hands well with warm soapy water for 20 seconds before and after preparing food and before eating.
- Use separate cutting surfaces for vegetables and raw meat; be sure to wash the cutting boards well after each use.
- Wash fruits and vegetables under running water before preparing and eating; scrub produce with a thick or tough rind or skin with a vegetable brush to remove visible dirt.
- Rinse salad leaves one at a time under running water
- Cut your fruits and vegetables fresh at home; try to limit or avoid purchasing pre-cut produce.
- Choose pasteurized eggs, cheese and dairy.
- Keep hot foods hot (above 140 degrees F) and cold foods cold (below 40 degrees F).
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator or microwave. Never thaw foods at room temperature, and cook foods immediately after thawing.
- Refrigerate all leftovers within 2 hours of cooking and eat them within 48 hours.
- Eat only well-cooked meat, fish, and eggs. Avoid raw or undercooked food.
- Wash the top of cans well with soap and water before opening them.



Change in Appetite

- Aim for 5-6 small meals per day instead of 3 larger meals.
- Avoid drinking liquids with meals as they can fill you up quickly; plan to eat first then drink liquids.
- Increase physical activity if possible; start slow and increase frequency and duration as able.
- Eat with family or friends when able to increase enjoyment of eating.
- Keep healthy, high calorie and high protein snacks on hand such as:
 - Trail mix
 - Cheese and crackers
 - Yogurt
 - Smoothies
 - Ice cream
 - Hummus and crackers
- Set phone alarm for reminders of snack and mealtime.



Nausea

- Eat 6-8 small meals per day instead of 3 larger meals
- Serve foods cold or warm over hot.
- Choose dry, bland foods such as crackers, toast, and dry cereal over spicy or sweet options.
- Speak to the doctor about an anti-nausea medication.
- Avoid eating in a room that is overly warm or that has strong cooking odors.
- Try sipping on cool water infused with lemon or ginger.
- Suck on peppermint or lemon hard candy.
- Choose soft and bland high-protein foods such as:
 - Boiled or baked meat (and cooled), fish, poultry, and eggs
 - Low fat yogurt or cheese



Dry Mouth or Thick Saliva

- Drink 8 to 12, 8 oz. cups of liquid a day; to make it easier to meet fluid needs, carry a reusable, BPA-free plastic, stainless steel or glass water bottle.
- Eat soft, bland-tasting foods that are cold or at room temperature.
- Try pureed fruits and vegetables, soft-cooked chicken and fish, thin cereal such as farina, popsicles, and ices
- Add broth, soup, sauces, or gravy to moisten foods.
- Suck on frozen grapes, popsicles, or ice chips.
- Keep your mouth clean by rinsing before and after meals with plain water; brush teeth frequently and floss a few times per week.
- Avoid commercial alcohol-based mouthwashes, acidic and alcoholic beverages, and tobacco as they may irritate your mouth.
- Limit consumption of caffeine-containing beverages, such as coffee, tea, or and soda.



Mouth Sores

- Eat soft, bland foods, such as soup, cooked cereal, mashed potatoes or other vegetables, plain pasta, yogurt, pudding, or smoothies.
- Puree or liquefy foods in a blender to make them easier to swallow.
- Eat foods that are cold or warm, rather than hot, to reduce mouth irritation.
- Drink through a straw to bypass mouth sores.
- Avoid spices, seasonings, and condiments such as pepper, chili powder, cloves, nutmeg, salsa, pepper sauces, and horseradish.
- Avoid rough, dry, or coarse foods, which can scratch an irritated mouth or throat.
- Eat high-protein, high calorie foods such as well-cooked fish and chicken, smoothies, yogurts, ice cream and soups.
- Rinse your mouth often to remove food and germs



Difficulty Swallowing

- Follow instructions for any special eating techniques given by your speech therapist
- Report immediately to your doctor any coughing or choking while eating
- Eat small and frequent meals and snacks
- Use healthy, high-calorie, home-made smoothies or liquid nutrition supplements such as Ensure® or Glucerna®

Tips for thickening liquids:

- Commercial thickeners – A liquid's thickness can be adjusted depending upon the amount used. Follow the instructions on the label.
- Pureed vegetables – can be useful for soups, but may alter the flavor.
- Instant mashed potatoes – can be useful for soups, but may alter the flavor.
- Baby rice cereal – is useful when a very thick product is needed.
- Tapioca, flour, cornstarch – can be used to thicken liquids to different consistencies, but need to be cooked.



Sore or Irritated Throat

- Avoid tart, acidic, or salty beverages and foods such as citrus fruit juices (grapefruit, orange, lemon, lime); pickled and vinegary foods (relishes and pickles); tomato-based foods (chili, salsa, spaghetti sauce, pizza)
- Avoid rough-textured foods, such as dry toast, granola, and raw fruits and vegetables
- Eat warm or cool foods as they can be soothing; very hot and very cold foods may be more difficult to tolerate
- Avoid strong spices such as chili powder, cloves, curry, hot sauce, nutmeg, and peppers; seasoning with herbs such as basil, oregano and thyme may be easier to tolerate
- Choose soft or creamy foods, such as soup, cooked cereal, well-cooked pasta or risotto, cheese, mashed potatoes or other vegetables, yogurt, scrambled eggs, smoothie, ice cream or yogurt



When Things Aren't Tasting Right

- Try to serve foods cold, as cold food has less odor
- Cover drinks, smoothies or nutrition supplements and drink from a straw, or use a child's covered drinking cup if odor is a problem
- If experiencing a metallic taste try eating with plastic utensils and flavoring water with lemon juice or with fresh fruit
- Avoid choosing your favorite foods as to avoid associating them with an unpleasant taste
- Drink liquids often or use gum, hard candies or mints to remove bad taste in mouth
- When food tastes flavorless:
 - try adding seasoning/spices such as: onion, garlic, chili powder, basil, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, barbecue sauce, mustard, ketchup, or mint
- When food tastes too sweet:
 - try adding small amount of salt or lemon juice to foods
 - choose foods and desserts that are less sweet- such as diluted juice, yogurt, custard, cottage cheese, graham crackers, fruit crumble, nuts, crackers and cheese, chips or pretzels, nut butter
- When food tastes too salty:
 - add small amount of sugar to foods to lessen the salty flavor
 - choose low sodium options such as whole fruits and vegetables and "low sodium" options at the grocery store



This information is brief and general. It should not be the only source of your information on this health care topic. It is not to be used or relied on for diagnosis or treatment. It does not take the place of instructions from your doctor. Talk to your health care providers before making a health care decision.

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