

# Head and Neck Radiation Reminders

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## 1. Keep swallowing!

Using your swallowing muscles before and during treatments can help you maintain your ability to swallow. A speech language pathologist can give you a home exercise plan and help you find ways to safely swallow.

## 2. Making your food easier to swallow

- Add sauces, butter and gravies to make food moist.
- Cook foods well so that they are soft and easy to chew.  
Cut foods into small pieces and chew well.
- Use a blender or food processor to make smoothies and soups.

## 3. Take care of your mouth

- Use a soft-bristled toothbrush. Brush your teeth after meals and before bedtime.
- Rinse your mouth with an alcohol-free mouthwash.
- Avoid the common toothpaste ingredient Sodium Laurel Sulfate (SLS) because it may cause dry mouth.

## 4. Ways to manage mouth pain

- Avoid things that may bother your mouth, such as tomatoes, vinegar, spicy foods, alcohol, pop, and citrus like lemons, oranges and grapefruit.
- If prescribed by your doctor, take pain medicine 30 to 45 minutes before eating so that the medicine has time to take effect.

## 5. Ways to manage dry mouth

- Try to drink at least 64 ounces (8 cups) of fluids each day. Avoid pop and acidic drinks like orange or tomato juice because they may bother your mouth.
- Suck on sugarless hard candies or ice chips.
- Use a cool mist humidifier next to your bed at night to keep the air moist.
- Artificial saliva may provide short-term relief – here are some options:
  - Biotene – oral rinse, toothpaste, spray, lozenges or gel
  - OraCoat Xylimelts – place on the outside of your back teeth and/or gums

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This info is a general resource. It is not meant to replace your doctor's advice.  
Ask your doctor or health care team any questions. Always follow their instructions.