

Cancer Treatment: Help for Mouth and Throat Problems

[Host] Cancer treatment to the head and neck can cause some pretty uncomfortable side effects.

You may have a sore, swollen throat and mouth a lump in your throat or pain when you swallow.

You may also have voice changes a burning in your chest or throat a cough or a change in your taste.

And sometimes, people develop a yeast infection in the mouth called thrush.

These symptoms may be mild or very severe and they can make it hard to eat.

If your symptoms are severe, your doctor might recommend a feeding tube, to make sure you get the nutrition you need.

Your doctor may also prescribe pain medicines or special gels, rinses, or mouthwashes.

There are also things you can do at home.

Try to think of food as medicine part of your treatment.

You need plenty of calories and protein and it doesn't matter if they go in through your mouth or a tube.

What does matter is good nutrition so you have energy to feel better you don't lose weight and your body is able to heal from the changes the treatment is causing.

If you have choices, you may want to think about foods you like but don't necessarily love.

[Bob] "My doctor told me I was eating to live, not living to eat.

She suggested I pick a food I like and not something I'd really miss if I never ate it again because after treatment some people don't want anything to do with the stuff they ate during treatment.

I chose mac and cheese and I'd make a big bowl of it in the morning and leave it in the kitchen.

Each time I passed the bowl, I made myself take a bite.

Thanksgiving without mashed potatoes?

No thank you.

But I could live without mac and cheese."

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[Host] In general, soft, moist foods go down easiest things like cooked cereals, scrambled eggs, cottage cheese, or even baby food, which now comes in a wide variety of flavors flavors that combine fruits and veggies with meat, grains, or yogurt.

Other soft, easy-to-eat foods are ones you can add sauce, butter, oil, or yogurt to or liquid nutrition drinks, which also come in many flavors.

Stay away from spicy or acidic foods.

One taste of salsa or orange juice can set your throat on fire.

And don't eat anything that's too hot or cold room temperature is best.

After eating, try to wait 30 minutes before lying down.

And rinse your mouth to keep it clean and help with pain.

Your care team will tell you what kind of rinse to use and how often to use it.

Mouth and throat problems from cancer treatment can be hard to deal with.

But time does heal them and many of these problems get much better several weeks after treatment ends.

And if you have any questions or concerns, be sure to share them with your care team.