Tips for Managing Dry Mouth

Dry mouth is a common side effect during and following cancer treatment. Several cancer medications and radiation therapy can cause decreased saliva production which can make it difficult to talk, chew, and swallow food. Symptoms of dry mouth include increased thirst, sore mouth and tongue, problems swallowing and talking, and taste changes. The following tips and recommendations may help you to better manage dry mouth.

Chew gum or suck on ice chips, hard candy, or popsicles to help relieve dry mouth.

- Keeping gum, ice chips, candy, or popsicles in the mouth helps keep the mouth moist.
- Choose sugar-free or low-sugar gum or candy for prevention of cavities.
- In place of ice chips, try frozen grapes.
- Use lip balm if your lips become dry.

Choose foods that are easier to chew and swallow.

- Choose soft foods like scrambled eggs, puddings, and ice cream.
- Avoid dry foods.
- Cut your food into small pieces to make it easier to chew and swallow.
- Soups and stews are good options, as long as meats are soft or cut into small pieces.
- Try mashed potatoes and rice instead of crackers or breads.
- Choose canned fruits or applesauce instead of raw fruits.
- Puddings, ice cream, and sorbet are also good options.
- Serve foods with gravy, broths, or sauces. This will make them easier to chew and swallow.
- Season your food with citrus and herbs instead of salt or hot spices.

Drink at least eight to ten 8-ounce cups of liquid each day.

- Drinking liquids with meals can make it easier to swallow foods.
- Sip cool drinks in between meals to ensure adequate fluid intake.
- Tart drinks in small amounts, such as lemonade, may help your mouth produce more saliva.
- Keep a glass of water next to your bed at night. Drink when you wake during the night.

Eat small meals, and eat more often.

- Eating small, frequent meals will ensure that you are meeting your nutritional needs.
- Try to have a good source of protein with meals and snacks. Eggs, cottage cheese, yogurt, beans, lentils, and smoothies are good soft food choices that also provide protein.

Promote a moist mouth.

- Rinse your mouth every 1-2 hours.
- Mix ¼ tsp. of baking soda and 1/8 tsp. salt with 1 cup warm water. Rinse with plain water after using
• Ask your doctor if an artificial saliva product might help. Radiation and some medications can decrease saliva production.

Avoid things that make dry mouth worse.

• Alcoholic drinks can worsen dry mouth.
• Do not smoke or use other tobacco products.
• If you do smoke, talk to your healthcare team about quitting.

Tell a doctor or nurse if you have white patches in your mouth.

• White patches can be evidence of an infection.