

Advice for a dry sore mouth and taste changes

If your mouth is dry

- Ask a nurse or doctor to examine your mouth as the cause may be treatable.
- If your tongue is coated you could clean it using bicarbonate of soda: use 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda dissolved in a pint (586mls) of warm water. Clean your tongue with cotton wool dipped in the solution or with a soft brush.
- Frequent small sips of drinks, even only a few sips at a time can greatly soothe the mouth, as it helps keep it moist. You may find fizzy drinks the most refreshing.
- Try sucking ice cubes or ice-lollies. Small home-made lollies can be easily made from milkshakes or fruit juice frozen in an ice cube tray.
- Try sucking sugar free sweets or chew sugar free gum regularly, after meals. Salivix pastilles (available on prescription and from the chemist) stimulate saliva production.
- Moisten foods with lots of sauce or gravy.
- Avoid chocolate and pastry, as they tend to stick to the roof of your mouth.
- Use lip balm or Vaseline for dry lips.
- Your doctor can also prescribe artificial saliva spray or gels, mouthwashes or lozenges.

If your mouth is sore

- Ask your nurse or doctor to examine your mouth as the cause may be treatable.
- If you wear dentures, soak them in a denture cleaning solution overnight and leave them out for as long as possible during the day to prevent chafing.
- Use a soft toothbrush to clean your teeth.
- Drink plenty of nourishing fluids. If you find fresh fruit juices sting your mouth try less acidic juices e.g. apple or peach juice.
- Pineapple chunks or melon slices can clean the mouth and may be refreshing.
- Cold drinks may be more soothing than hot drinks. Try adding crushed ice to drinks.
- Try drinking through a straw.
- Try soft moist foods such as custards, sorbet, ice cream, mousse, egg custards.
- Your doctor can also prescribe mouthwashes.
- Avoid acidic/salty/spicy foods as they may sting your mouth.
- Avoid rough textures such as toast, crackers, or raw vegetables, which may scrape sore skin.

Advice for taste changes

You may be finding it difficult to eat because of the taste of food. Previously well-liked foods may taste different, unpleasant or not seem to taste at all. Occasionally your taste buds may exaggerate sweetness or sourness.

- Ask your nurse or doctor to examine your mouth as the cause may be treatable.
- Concentrate on eating the foods you enjoy the taste of and ignore those that do not appeal.
- However, do try them again after a few weeks, as your taste buds may have gone back to normal.
- If food tastes metallic you could try using plastic cutlery.
- If your taste has decreased or is absent try sharp-tasting foods and drinks e.g. fresh fruit, fruit juices, bitter boiled sweets, home-made lemonade, tonic water, ginger ale or ginger beer. Add flavours e.g. sugar, salt, herbs, spices.
- If taste has increased avoid the above.
- If you find you go off the taste of red meat, do not worry: this is quite common. Concentrate on choosing chicken, eggs, cheese, fish, beans and pulses. Try marinating meat or add sauces e.g. curry or sweet and sour. Cold meats may taste better and you could add pickle and chutney.
- Some people might go off the taste of tea or coffee. You could try alternatives such as lemon or herbal tea, hot chocolate, Horlicks, fruit juice or ice-cold fizzy drinks like lemonade.

