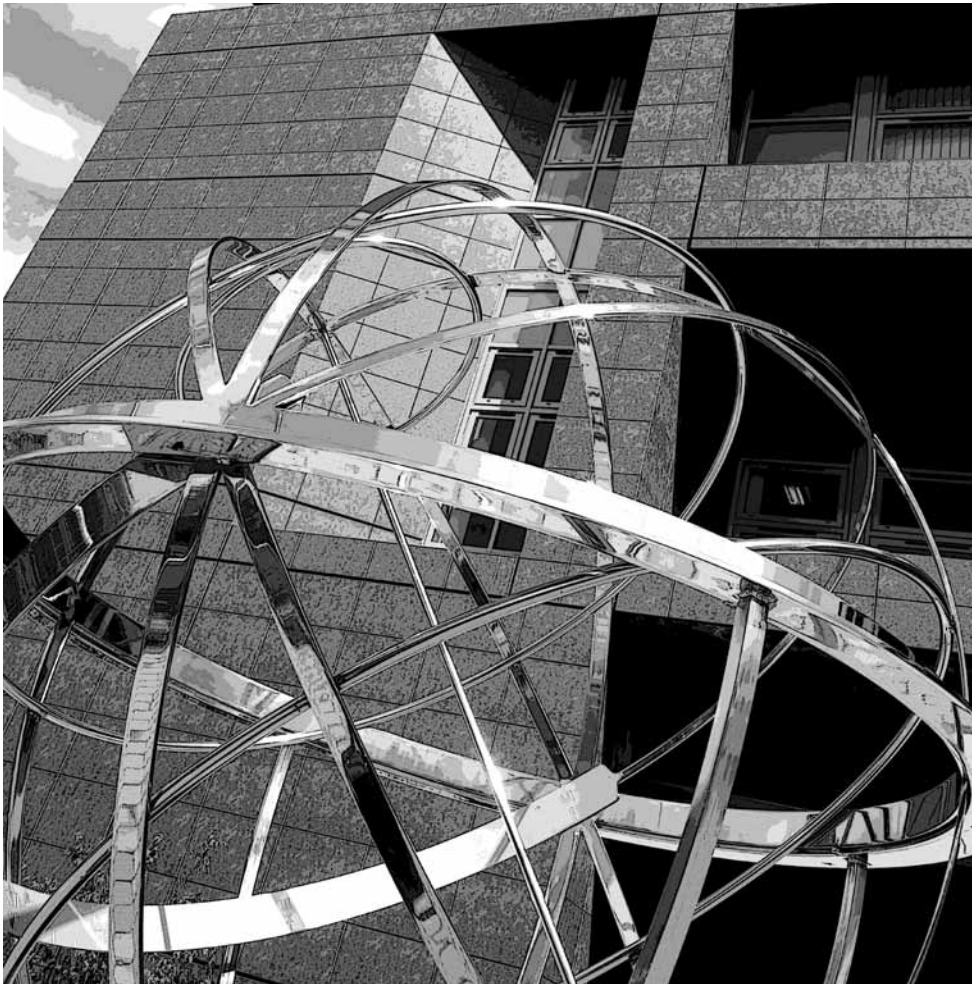


Oxford Centre for Head and Neck Oncology

What can I eat?

A Guide to Eating and Drinking
during and after Radiotherapy



Introduction

Nutrition is important as it provides your body with energy and protein, and the vitamins and minerals needed for your body to function well. It enables your body to cope better during your radiotherapy and improves your rate of healing and recovery after the treatment.

When your mouth and throat became sore (mucositis) and dry (xerostomia), eating and drinking become difficult. You may also find that your taste is lost or changes in some way.

If you have a feeding tube it is important to continue to eat and drink for as long as possible during your treatment. This will help to progress with eating and drinking once radiotherapy has finished.

If dryness (xerostomia) and soreness (mucositis) are a problem, try:	When xerostomia/ mucositis is improving
<p>Breakfasts</p> <p>Smooth, bland cereal made with plenty of full cream milk e.g. Ready Brek, porridge, rusks soaked in milk, 'Oats-so-simple', Weetabix</p> <p>Scrambled eggs (cooked in a saucepan) with extra full cream milk</p>	<p>Cereal with more lumps e.g. crushed oatmeal cereal (not muesli), crushed Shreddies/ Cornflakes / Special K softened with plenty of milk</p> <p>Soft boiled eggs mashed with butter</p> <p>Scrambled eggs with added cream cheese /chopped smoked salmon or ham</p> <p>Omelettes / poached egg</p> <p>Savoury cheese custard</p> <p>Fried Eggs</p>

If dryness (xerostomia) and soreness (mucositis) are a problem, try:	When xerostomia/ mucositis is improving
<p>Drinks</p> <p>Milk with extra milk powder</p> <p>Warm malted drinks e.g. – Horlicks, Ovaltine</p> <p>Neutral / vanilla supplement drinks</p> <p>Smoothies based on milk <i>(see our “Nourishing drinks” booklets for ideas)</i></p> <p>You could also try: mango and apple juice, kiwi juice, carrot juice, cranberry juice, diluted blackcurrant cordial, soda water</p> <p>Please note that if you are having treatment to your mouth, citrus fruits / fruit juice, summer fruits and bananas may sting</p>	<p>A wider range of drinks</p>

If dryness (xerostomia) and soreness (mucositis) are a problem, try:	When xerostomia/ mucositis is improving
<p>Light Meals</p> <p>Soups</p> <p>Smooth, bland soups at room temperature e.g. cream of mushroom, cream of chicken, cream of asparagus, stilton soup, lentil soup, "Beef tea"</p> <p>Puréed or smooth condensed vegetable soups (such as carrot, swede, parsnip) with added cream or 'smooth' cheese e.g. cream cheese. Avoid tomato soup and soups with spices and artificial flavourings as these can sting. Try adding pureed soya meat, quorn, tofu, pulses to increase protein if you are a vegetarian</p> <p>Savoury soufflé</p> <p>Scrambled eggs (cooked in a saucepan) with extra milk and butter.</p>	<p>Try adding to soups:</p> <p>Potato mashed with plenty of butter and milk</p> <p>Liquidised vegetables (e.g. swede, carrots, parsnip, cauliflower tips)</p> <p>Well-cooked small pasta shapes</p> <p>Soya chunks, textured vegetable protein (TVP), quorn, tofu, cooked pulses e.g. lentils</p> <p>Small pieces of bread soaked in soup or dunked in olive oil</p> <p>Soft boiled eggs mashed with butter</p> <p>Scrambled eggs with added cream cheese / chopped smoked salmon or ham Omelettes/poached egg Savoury cheese custard</p>

If dryness (xerostomia) and soreness (mucositis) are a problem, try:	When xerostomia/ mucositis is improving
<p>Main Meals</p> <p>Dishes with smooth cheese sauce e.g. well cooked cauliflower cheese, tinned macaroni cheese, mashed egg in cheese sauce</p> <p>Puréed rice dishes Extra sauce/stock may be needed to help purée</p> <p>Fish in sauce, puréed and sieved to remove bones and skin</p> <p>‘Boil in the bag’ cod in butter/ parsley sauce well-mashed</p> <p>Completely smooth, puréed meat stews / casseroles</p> <p>Corned beef hash (completely smooth) with extra gravy</p>	<p>These dishes blended for less time to leave slightly bigger lumps</p> <p>Possible additions: – mashed avocado – tinned salmon/tuna – cream cheese</p> <p>Try dishes made with short-grain rice simmered until very soft e.g. paella, kedgeree, creamy risottos</p> <p>Steamed / baked fish (no skin/ bones) e.g. sea bass, plaice, salmon, trout, smoked fish, mackerel mashed with plenty of white /parsley/ cheese sauce /butter or olive oil</p> <p>Boiled fish (no skin/ bones) liquidised with mashed potato and salad cream</p> <p>Fish chowder (no skin/ bones) Pieces of deep fried cod (remove batter)</p> <p>Meat pie mashed with plenty of gravy</p> <p>Casseroles with small pieces of well-cooked meat</p>

If dryness (xerostomia) and soreness (mucositis) are a problem, try:

When xerostomia/ mucositis is improving

Meat pie or cooked liver/steak liquidised with extra gravy

Cooked lentils mashed with a fork in stews, casseroles or added to meat dishes

Corned beef, meatballs, faggots, skinless sausages, sausage meat, fried Spam mashed with plenty of gravy / sauce

Sliced ham puréed with mashed potato and cheese or parsley sauce

Puréed and sieved pulses e.g. cooked lentils in stews, casseroles or added to meat dishes

Vegetables can be added to main meals

Smooth, steamed or microwaved, puréed vegetables with added butter or olive oil e.g. carrots, swede, parsnips, broccoli tips, spinach, cauliflower tips

Vegetables blended for less time to leave small lumps
Progress to soft, well-cooked vegetables mashed with a fork adding butter, white or cheese sauce/gravy

Roasted peppers, well mashed.
Warm beetroot (no vinegar)

Frozen individual portions of puréed vegetables e.g spinach balls, carrots and swede, cooked as manufacturers instructions

If dryness (xerostomia) and soreness (mucositis) are a problem, try:

Desserts

Warm custard, crème fraiche, fromage frais, mousses, ice-cream (not too cold), crème caramel, milk jellies

Smooth, plain milk puddings e.g. semolina, ground rice pudding, tapioca, egg custard

Smooth egg custard (no pastry)

Very soft and moist bread and butter pudding with custard / cream (no dried fruit)

Cantaloupe, honeydew melon, watermelon, tinned pears, peaches, mangoes, puréed apples or pears with added custard, cream or crème fraiche, mashed or puréed as necessary

When xerostomia/ mucositis is improving

Milk puddings with more texture e.g. rice puddings/ semolina with powdered nuts or soft mashed fruit

Add stewed fruit, soft mashed canned or fresh fruit e.g. stewed apple or pear, mashed peaches, mangoes or pears from a tin, honeydew melon

If you have had treatment to your mouth you may need to avoid citrus fruits, summer fruits and bananas initially as these can sting

What if I feel too tired to eat?

It is very common to be tired during and particularly after the treatment. Do not fight sleep! Here are some hints and tips about how to cope with food at home:-

- Puréed meals can be prepared in bulk, then frozen in individual portions. Take a portion from the freezer the day before you want to eat it and place it in the fridge. Then reheat until piping hot and allow to cool until warm.
- Some supermarkets sell frozen pre-prepared individual portions of vegetables e.g. mashed potato, spinach balls.
- Try buying 'packet' white/parsley/cheese sauces, condensed soups (e.g. chicken, mushroom) or gravy mixes instead of preparing your own. Add extra milk to make a more fluid white sauce if needed.
- Ready desserts and high calorie drinks / smoothies are great for increasing your energy intake.
- Here are some store cupboard ideas:
 - Tinned soups e.g. chicken, mushroom, asparagus.
 - Packet sauces e.g. white, parsley, cheese, gravy.
 - Malted drinks e.g. Ovaltine, Horlicks.
 - Tinned pulses e.g. lentils.
 - Tinned or packet milk puddings e.g. rice pudding, custard, semolina.
 - Tinned salmon or tuna.
 - Packet cereals e.g. Ready Brek, Weetabix or porridge oats.
 - Tinned or frozen vegetables e.g. carrots, spinach.

Getting the most from each mouthful

If you are eating less than normal, it is important to make sure that each mouthful gives you as much nourishment as possible.

To increase the calorie content of your food, you can add extra milk powder, cream, cheese, margarine, butter or olive oil. Do not worry about including fat in your diet as it will help your wounds to heal and your recovery from the radiotherapy treatment. The dietitian may give you other products to try.

If you are overweight or have a history of high blood cholesterol, you can discuss this with your dietitian or doctor.

What about vitamins and minerals?

During radiotherapy the dietitian may recommend nutritional supplement drinks, a vitamin supplement and/or tube feeding to ensure you receive all the nutrients that your body needs to get through the treatment. Please discuss vitamin and/or mineral supplements that you are taking with your dietitian.

After the radiotherapy treatment

As you recover from the effects of your treatment, eating and drinking should gradually become easier. Everybody is different so the length of time it takes will depend upon:-

- The treatment you have received
- The severity of your side-effects
- How easily you could swallow before the radiotherapy
- Whether you could continue swallowing during your treatment.

The Speech and Language therapists, dietitians, specialist nurses and medical staff will help to support you as much as possible during this time.

For further information, advice or suggestions please contact:

Name:

Contact number:

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

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