

MOUTH and THROAT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You or your loved one has been diagnosed with a type of blood cancer. You may experience side effects from the type of therapy you receive. Having a sore, dry mouth and a sore throat are common side effects. How can you manage them?

This fact sheet will help you:

- Get an overview of mouth and throat side effects
- Understand the role of good nutrition
- Learn how to manage these side effects and optimize your health and well-being
- Get a list of questions to ask your healthcare team





Good nutrition is an important part of cancer treatment and managing side effects. Sucking on ice chips is one way to soothe your sore mouth.

How severely these side effects impact you depends on the treatment. Side effects may improve as your treatment changes, and most go away when treatment ends.

Managing side effects is an important part of cancer treatment. Be sure to talk to your healthcare team about any side effects you may have. They can help you manage these as you go through treatment.

Mouth and throat side effects

Both cancer and your treatment can cause side effects. A common side effect is damage to the cells that line the inside of your mouth and throat. This can lead to pain, sores, trouble swallowing, dry mouth, and infections.

It's important to manage these side effects during cancer treatment to maintain your overall health and quality of life.

Side effects may include:

- Sores in the mouth and throat
- Burning or pain in the mouth or throat
- Trouble swallowing
- Dry mouth
- White patches or coating in the mouth (may be a sign of infection)
- Changes to the taste of certain foods
- Sensitivity to hot or cold foods

Talk to your healthcare team if you have any of these side effects to learn how to manage or treat them.

The importance of good nutrition

Eating well to avoid malnutrition is important during cancer treatment, but mouth and throat side effects can make eating and drinking uncomfortable.

About malnutrition

- You may lose your appetite and lose weight too quickly
- It can result in not eating or absorbing enough calories or nutrients for your body to function well
- It can increase your risk of health complications, hospitalization, infections, loss of muscle strength, and overall poor quality of life
- It may delay, change, or stop your cancer treatment

Talk to your healthcare team if you are losing weight.

Managing side effects

Tips to care for your mouth

- Go to the dentist before starting treatment to take care of any dental concerns, including cavities or gum disease
- Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue after each meal and before bed with a soft bristled toothbrush
- Rinse your mouth a few times a day with a mixture of 1 litre (1 quart) of water, 5 ml (1 teaspoon) baking soda and 4 ml (¾ teaspoon) of salt (don't use mouthwash with alcohol, as it may irritate your mouth)
- Floss if your doctor says it's safe
- If you have braces on your teeth, ask your dentist if they recommend removing them
- Avoid cigarettes and tobacco products, which irritate the mouth
- Avoid toothpicks and sharp objects

If your gums bleed or have white patches on them, this could be a sign of infection. Talk to your healthcare team.

Tips to manage a sore throat and mouth

- Choose soft, bland foods that are easy to chew and swallow
- Cut food into small pieces, moisten food with sauce or gravy, or dip bread and crackers into tea or milk
- Avoid spicy, salty, hard, crunchy, and acidic foods (lemons, limes, oranges, tomatoes)
- Eat small meals throughout the day
- Avoid alcoholic and carbonated drinks
- Drink cool liquids or suck on frozen fruit, ice chips, or ice pops

Dental work may not be safe during cancer treatment. Check with your healthcare team before you get your teeth cleaned or have any dental work done.



Tips to manage a sore throat and mouth (cont'd)

- Use a straw to drink
- Allow hot foods and drinks to cool before eating or drinking

A registered dietitian can help you get the proper nutrition when you have a sore mouth and throat. Talk to your healthcare team and ask for a referral.

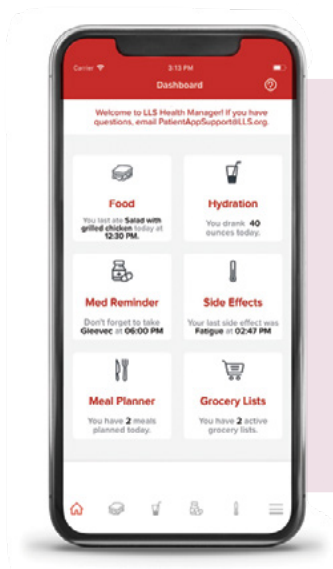
Tips to manage a dry mouth

- Keep your mouth moist using sugar-free gum, ice pops, and ice chips
- Use lip a lip care product on dry lips
- Eat foods that are easy to chew and swallow (soft foods, soups, and stews)
- Moisten foods with gravy and dips
- Add tart foods (lemonade, cranberry juice) to your diet to help produce more saliva
- Drink at least 8 to 10 tall glasses of fluids daily

Tips to manage changes in taste

- Rinse your mouth before and after eating
- Try sugar-free gum or mints
- Try sweet marinades for meat or other protein sources (eggs, cheese, nuts, or beans) if meat tastes bitter
- Experiment with seasonings and sauces to change the taste
- Use plastic utensils to avoid the metallic taste from metal ones
- Minimize strong smells by not eating where you cook, using a fan, using a cup with a lid and straw, and serving food at room temperature
- If possible, ask a friend or family member to prepare your meals

You may need **medication** to help relieve symptoms. Your doctor can prescribe medications, mouthwashes, lozenges, sprays, and artificial saliva products to help. If eating is painful, the doctor may prescribe pain medication. Your healthcare team will guide you through this process.



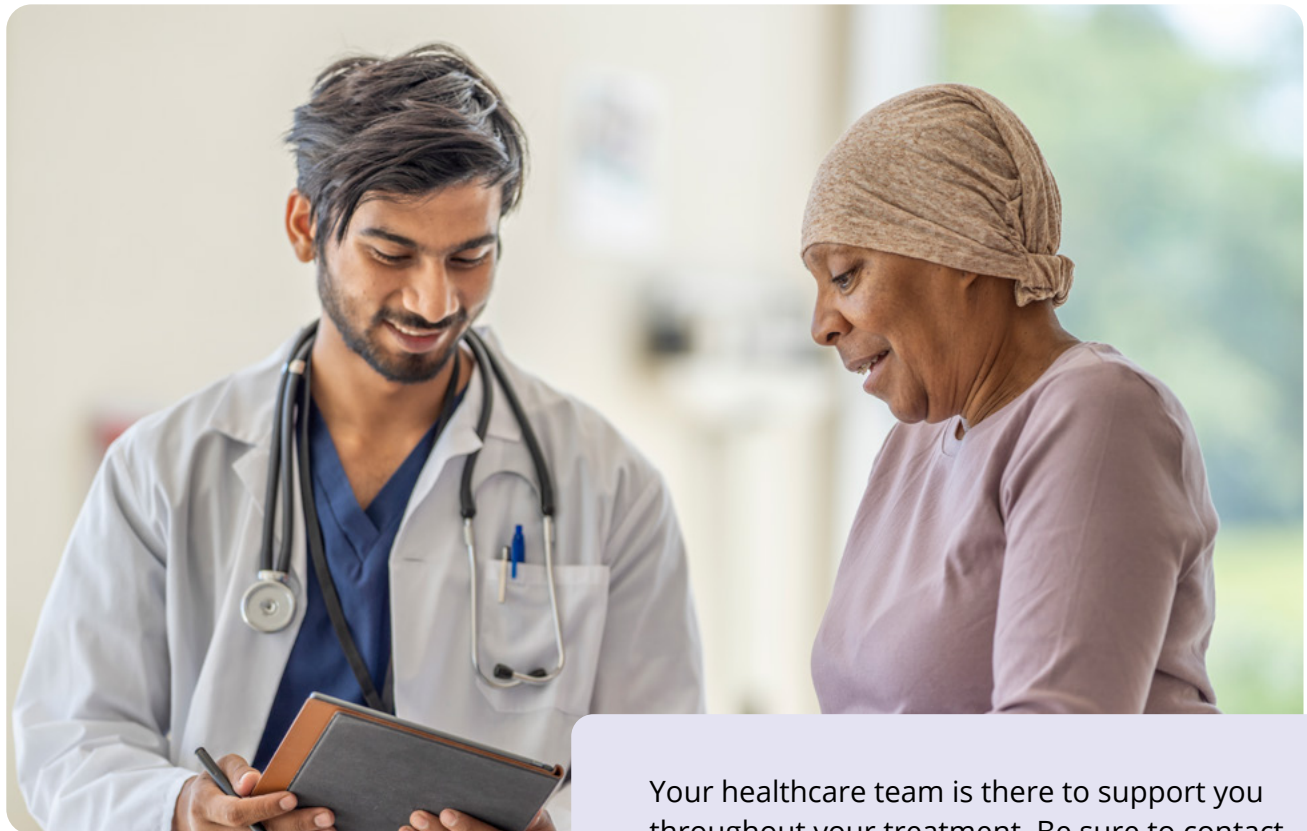
Track your side effects with the LLS Health Manager App

bloodcancers.ca/health-manager-app

Managing your side effects is an important part of cancer care. Tracking your medication, side effects, and food and nutrition intake allows you to share the information easily with your doctor to identify patterns and strategies.

Questions to ask your healthcare team

- What are the potential side effects of my treatment?
- What can I do to manage these side effects?
- Can you refer me to supportive care for help managing side effects?
- Can you refer me to a registered dietitian?
- Can you give me nutrition guidelines to follow?
- Can you recommend any medicines that can help?
- What signs or symptoms require a visit to a healthcare professional or a trip to Emergency?



Your healthcare team is there to support you throughout your treatment. Be sure to contact them if you have side effects so they can be managed quickly.

This fact sheet was reviewed by
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Never hesitate to contact us, we're here to help!

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