

Radiation Therapy Difficulty Swallowing

You may have difficulty swallowing if you are treated in the head and neck area.

Tips for Managing Difficulty Swallowing:

- Take small sips of liquids with each mouthful of food to help “wash” food down.
- Dunk or soak dry foods in liquids such as herbal tea, milk, hot cocoa, soups or broth.
- Cut up food into small pieces, mash food or puree food in a blender if needed.
- Avoid dry, crunchy foods such as chips and toast.
- Use crustless breads and extra butter and salad dressings on sandwiches.
- Inform your radiation oncologist, nurse or radiation therapist if you have pain with swallowing as there may be medications available to help.
- Choose foods that soft and easier to swallow (see list below). Additional information is available through Nutrition Services.

EASY TO SWALLOW FOODS

Milk and Alternatives

- white milk, chocolate milk, buttermilk or soy beverages
- smooth custards or puddings made with milk
- yogurt and yogurt drinks
- cream soups made with milk
- creamed cottage cheese, feta cheese, ricotta and other soft cheeses
- grated cheese or cheese sauces
- ice cream, milkshakes

Meat and Alternatives

- tender, moist meats and poultry (stew or braise)
- ground beef, pork, chicken or turkey
- soft fish (fresh or frozen)
- canned fish, poultry or meat (e.g. flakes of chicken, turkey or ham)
- soft boiled, scrambled or poached eggs
- omelets, soufflés
- baked beans (homemade or canned)
- canned legumes (e.g. lentils, kidney beans, black beans, etc.)
- bean spreads or dips (e.g. hummus, refried beans)
- canned soups containing beans, lentils or split peas
- soft casseroles (e.g. macaroni and cheese, creamed chicken or tuna)
- smooth peanut or almond butter
- finely ground nuts
- tofu (soybean curd)
- blenderized or minced meats, poultry or fish

Grain Products

- hot cereal thinned with milk or cream
- pablum, grits
- rice pudding
- buttered rice or noodles
- pasta cooked in milk
- soft pasta dishes
- bread or cookies (without seeds, nuts, grain pieces, dried fruits or hard crusts) dipped in milk or cocoa
- soups thickened with barley, noodles, rice or crackers
- pancakes, crepes, waffles or French toast moistened with butter, margarine, syrup or sauce

Vegetables and Fruit

- soft-cooked or canned vegetables
- mashed potatoes moistened with butter, margarine, sour cream or sauce
- finely grated or shredded vegetables
- canned fruit such as peaches, apricots, pears, orange segments
- applesauce, baked apples
- poached or cooked fruit – eaten on its own or used to flavor milkshakes, ice cream, yogurt and cereal
- soft raw fruits such as melons, peaches, kiwi, berries and ripe bananas
- fruit and vegetable juices
- fruit nectars (e.g. apricot nectar, peach nectar)

Additional Support:

Contact Nutrition Services at 787-2109 for further information and assistance especially if you are experiencing weight loss.