

Easy to swallow foods

For people who have a sore mouth or throat from cancer or treatment

Cancer and treatment can make it hard to swallow or painful to eat certain foods. Choosing soft foods can help decrease your pain, and make eating easier and more enjoyable.

Protein foods

Meat and fish

- stewed, braised, or ground meat and poultry
- fish fillet, canned fish
- casserole, curry, soup, or stew made with meat, poultry, or fish
- pureed or minced meats, pâté

Dairy (lactose-free if needed)

- milk, milkshakes, hot chocolate, golden milk, smoothies made with protein food
- paneer, cottage, ricotta, or soft cheese
- labneh, sour cream
- yogurt (choose Greek or Icelandic for more protein), yogurt drinks, ayran, lassi, kefir

Eggs

- scrambled, poached, Chinese steamed eggs
- quiche, soufflés, omelettes
- egg salad, egg curry, shakshuka

Plant-based

- soy or pea milk
- tofu
- smooth peanut butter, nut butter, tahini
- dal, hummus, mujadara, ful medames
- canned or well-cooked lentils, beans, peas

Vegetables

- well-cooked, soft vegetables like beets, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, eggplant, okra, peas, squash, turnip, zucchini
- mashed parsnip, potatoes, yams, yuca root
- vegetables blended into soups or smoothies

Fruits

- apricot, avocado, banana, berries, lychee, plum, melon, papaya, mango, soft pear
- fruit sauce, baked, stewed, or canned fruit
- fruit added to smoothies
- low-acid juices like apple, grape, white cranberry juice
- fruit nectars like peach, pear, apricot, prune, mango

Grains

- hot cereal (oatmeal, creamy wheat, polenta, rice cereal, grits, congee)
- dumplings, pierogies, tamales
- soft pasta, noodle, rice dishes
- soft bread, paratha, pita, or roti with butter
- soups made with grains, noodles, or rice
- pancakes, French toast, crepes

Desserts

- cheesecake, cream pie
- custard, flan, jelly, kheer, mousse, pudding
- ice cream, frozen yogurt, sherbet
- soft cake, sweet buns, tres leches cake

Others (add for extra calories)

- butter, margarine, mayonnaise, oil
- curry, hoisin, or peanut sauce
- gravy, hollandaise
- cream cheese, cream sauce, raita
- honey, jam, syrups, condensed milk
- nutrition supplement drinks

Meal ideas

- congee made with tofu, egg, or meat
- dal with soft naan spread with butter
- noodles with ground meat and soft greens
- well-cooked cauliflower dipped in hummus
- fish curry with squash and white rice
- tender beef stew with potatoes and carrots
- wontons filled with meat and vegetables
- shepherd's pie with steamed zucchini
- soft tofu stew with white rice
- omelette with mashed sweet potatoes

Helpful tips

To make foods even softer:

- ✓ add sauce to food or sip on a drink between bites to help wash foods down
- ✓ boil, poach, stew, or steam meats, fish, chicken, and vegetables until tender
- ✓ soften cookies, crackers, and baked goods in tea, coffee, or milk
- ✓ use a blender to make smoothies and pureed soups

To add extra calories and protein:

- ✓ pick drinks that have calories and protein, like cow's milk, soy milk, specialty coffee drinks, milk shakes, lassi, smoothies, kefir, and nutrition supplement drinks
- ✓ use high-fat dairy products like whole 3.25% milk, cream, and full-fat yogurt in recipes
- ✓ add protein powder or skim milk powder to soft foods like congee and oatmeal
- ✓ mix an egg into hot cereal or soup while it is cooking
- ✓ add extra fat, like butter, margarine, or oil when cooking or to soups and sauces

Avoid foods that can make eating more painful:

- ☒ rough foods like raw vegetables, hard fruits, toast, crackers, nuts, popcorn, and chips
- ☒ acidic foods like tomatoes, citrus fruits like lemons and oranges, pickles, and vinegar
- ☒ spicy foods like pepper, chili, hot sauce, and barbecue sauce
- ☒ fried or crispy foods like samosas and chicken wings
- ☒ carbonated beverages like pop and soda water, and alcohol
- ☒ very hot or cold foods

If swallowing becomes too painful, you may find it more comfortable to eat pureed or liquid food.

Ask your dietitian how you can get enough nutrition while eating pureed or liquid food.

If you are a patient at the Odette Cancer Centre and you would like more nutrition information, please visit the Patient & Family Support office in TG 230 (T-wing, ground floor, room 230), call 416-480-4623 or visit [sunnybrook.ca/cancernutrition](https://www.sunnybrook.ca/cancernutrition)

This resource should be used for information and does not replace medical advice. For questions, concerns, or additional information, contact your dietitian. This resource is for personal use only.