

# difficulty swallowing

## Cancer

Dysphagia (pronounced dis-fay-juh) is the medical term that describes difficulty swallowing. Swallowing involves the coordinated activity of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and esophagus. Any changes in one of these body parts can make it difficult to swallow. Below are possible causes of swallowing problems.

### Esophagitis (pronounced i-sa-fe-ji-tes)

Esophagitis is the medical term that describes a sore and inflamed throat. A sore and inflamed throat can make it challenging and painful to swallow food and beverages.

### Mucositis (pronounced mu-co-si-tis)

Mucositis is the medical term to describe inflammation in the mouth, esophagus, and other areas of the GI tract. If any of these areas are inflamed it can become painful and challenging to swallow.

### Xerostomia (pronounced zir-e-sto-mia)

Xerostomia is the medical term for a dry mouth. Too dry of a mouth can make it difficult to pass food from the mouth down the esophagus.

### **Pain, inflammation, sores or lack of saliva in the mouth can all lead to swallowing challenges.**

To stay well-nourished, it's best to work with your health care provider and dietitian to create an individualized nutritional plan.

### Managing with Nutrition:

- Eat 5 or 6 smaller meals throughout the day instead of 3 large meals. Small quantities of food may be easier to swallow.
- Include soft, easy-to-swallow foods like scrambled eggs, cooked cereal or milkshakes.
- Cook foods until they are soft and tender.
- Cut foods into small pieces or use a food processor or blender to puree food to desired consistency.
- Add sauces, gravies, broth, or yogurt to help soften foods.
- Try sipping drinks through a straw, it may help make swallowing easier.
- Avoid foods that can bother or irritate your throat:
  - Hot (Temperature) Foods and Drinks
  - Highly Acidic Foods – tomatoes, oranges, lemonade
  - Sharp, Crunchy Foods- potato and tortilla chips
  - Alcoholic Beverages
  - Spicy Foods