



# Tips and Recipes to Ease Sore Mouth and Throat

Nutrition and Food Services Healthy Teaching Kitchen



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

[www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Tips for Managing Mouth and Throat Pain

Some people develop sores in their mouths while going through radiation or chemotherapy. Tender gums or throat pain are also common side effects of these treatments. Here are some tips to help with mouth and throat pain:

## Make Adjustments to the Foods You Eat

- Cook food until it is very tender. Add moisture with gravies, butter, sauces, or yogurt to make food easier to eat.
- Eat and drink foods and beverages at room temperature or cold items as these can be very soothing. Use a straw if needed. Ice chips and popsicles can help numb the mouth.
- Eat softer foods such as pudding, yogurt, soups, mashed potatoes, custard, casseroles, scrambled eggs, ice cream, gelatin desserts, ground or tender meats, or hot cereal such as oatmeal or grits.

## Leverage Beverages

- Drink plenty of fluids each day, letting any carbonated drinks stand after opening to get rid of some bubbles.
- Drink high-calorie and high-protein drinks such as milkshakes, smoothies made with high-calorie and high-protein foods, powdered breakfast drinks mixed with whole milk, or eggnog throughout the day.

## Practice Good Oral Hygiene

Keep your mouth clean. Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush as tolerated. Swish, gargle, and spit with a mild salt or baking soda and water solution before meals. Avoid alcohol-based mouthwashes.

## Avoid Items that Can Worsen Mouth and Throat Pain

- Very hot foods or beverages
- Acidic items such as vinegar and citrus juices (e.g. orange juice, grapefruit juice, lemon juice, tomato juice)
- Spicy foods
- Hard or very crunchy foods (e.g. dry toast, crackers)
- Carbonated beverages
- Alcohol and tobacco products

# Creamy Potato Soup

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes | Total: 40 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1½ cup

## Ingredients

3 medium russet potatoes, peeled and diced (about 3 cups, or 1 pound)  
1 small onion, diced (about 1 cup)  
2 large carrots, peeled and diced (about 2 cups)  
2 stalks celery, diced (about ½ cup)  
2 cups (16 ounces) chicken or vegetable broth  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons all-purpose or whole-wheat flour  
1½ cups milk (dairy or non-dairy)  
¼ cup sour cream  
Salt, to taste  
Ground black pepper, to taste

## Directions

1. In a large stockpot or Dutch oven, add the potatoes, onion, carrots, celery, and broth.
2. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium-low to maintain a simmer.
3. Cover the pot with a lid and cook for 15 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, in a separate medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat.
5. Add the flour and whisk together with the butter to form a paste called a roux.
6. Add the milk gradually, whisking as you pour.
7. Bring the roux-milk mixture to a simmer and cook until thickened, whisking constantly, about 2-3 minutes.
8. Add the thickened roux-milk mixture to the pot with the vegetables. Stir to combine and continue cooking for 3-5 minutes.
9. Add the sour cream and stir to combine.
10. Season with salt and pepper as needed.
11. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- This soup will keep in the refrigerator for 3-4 days.
- If you prefer a smooth consistency, blend the finished soup with an immersion (handheld) blender. If you don't have an immersion blender, a standing blender can be used. Transfer the soup to the blender, filling it no more than halfway. Remove the center piece of blender lid to allow steam to escape, then secure the lid on the blender. Place a clean kitchen towel over the opening in the lid and blend until smooth, about 2 minutes. Transfer the pureed soup to a large bowl and repeat the process with any remaining soup.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 260 | Total Fat: 11 g | Saturated Fat: 7 g  
Sodium: 500 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 32 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 9 g**

Adapted from [CookingClassy.com](http://CookingClassy.com) | Submitted by Robin LaCroix, RD, CSO

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Creamy Carrot-Sweet Potato Soup

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 25 minutes | Total: 40 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1½ cups

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon butter or extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion or 1 leek, diced (about 1 cup)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1-2 teaspoons)
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, minced or grated
- 4 large carrots, peeled and diced (about 4 cups)
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and diced (about 1 cup)
- 4 cups (32 ounces) reduced-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 cup whole milk or half-and-half
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper (optional)

## Recipe Notes

- Try this soup topped with plain Greek yogurt.
- If you don't have an immersion blender, complete Steps 7-8 using a standing blender. Transfer the soup to the blender, filling it no more than halfway. Remove the center piece of blender lid to allow steam to escape, then secure the lid on the blender. Place a clean kitchen towel over the opening in the lid and blend until smooth, about 2 minutes. Transfer the pureed soup to a large bowl and repeat the process with any remaining soup.

## Directions

1. Heat a large stockpot or Dutch oven over medium heat.
2. Add the butter or oil and heat until the butter is melted or the oil is shimmering.
3. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring often.
4. Add carrots, sweet potato, and broth.
5. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a simmer.
6. Cover the pot with a lid and cook until the carrots and sweet potatoes are very soft.
7. Puree the soup with an immersion (handheld) blender until smooth, about 2-5 minutes.
8. Add milk, salt, and black pepper (if using).
9. Serve warm.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 135 | Total Fat: 5 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 800 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 21 g | Dietary Fiber: 3.5 g | Protein: 5 g**

Adapted from [RecipeTinEats.com](http://RecipeTinEats.com) | Submitted by Robin LaCroix, RD, CSO

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# Chocolate-Peanut Butter Chia Pudding

Prep: 5 minutes | Chill: 2 hours | Total: 2 hours 5 minutes

Yield: 3 servings | Serving Size: ⅓ cup

## Ingredients

- 1 cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)
- ¼ cup chia seeds
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons sugar-based sweetener (e.g. sugar, honey, maple syrup)
- Pinch salt

## Directions

1. Add the milk, chia seeds, cocoa powder, peanut butter, sweetener, and salt to a mixing bowl, blender, or food processor.
2. Stir until well combined with a spoon in the mixing bowl or blend until smooth in the blender or food processor, about 2-3 minutes. Note that the mixture will be quite thin at this point.
3. If you used a blender or food processor, pour the mixture into a small bowl.
4. Cover the bowl with a lid or plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours. The mixture will thicken as it chills. This chia pudding will keep in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.
5. Stir together to recombine, then serve cold.

## Recipe Notes

- Try serving this chia pudding with fresh berries or sliced bananas.
- Chia pudding has a texture similar to tapioca pudding.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 190 | Total Fat: 10 g | Saturated Fat: 2.5 g  
Sodium: 140 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 20 g | Dietary Fiber: 5 g | Protein: 7 g**

Adapted from [LemonAndZest.com](http://LemonAndZest.com) | Submitted by Robin LaCroix, RD, CSO  
For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Throat-Soothing Milkshake

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 5 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1½ cups

## Ingredients

1 frozen banana, peeled and sliced before freezing

¼ cup vanilla ice cream

1 cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)

2-3 ice cubes

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

⅛-¼ teaspoon ground turmeric, to taste

## Directions

1. Add the milk, banana, ice cream, ice cubes, cinnamon, and turmeric to a blender or food processor.
2. Blend until smooth, about 2-3 minutes. You may need to stop and scrape the sides halfway through, depending on the strength of your blender or food processor.
3. Serve immediately.

## Recipe Notes

- For a chocolate flavor, use chocolate ice cream instead of vanilla ice cream or add 2-3 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- If you need extra calories, use whole milk or a high-fat non-dairy milk (e.g. full-fat coconut milk).
- If the milkshake is too thick, add 1-3 tablespoons of water or milk and continue blending.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 40 | Total Fat: 0 g | Saturated Fat: 0 g  
Sodium: 280 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 9 g | Dietary Fiber: 0 g | Protein: 1 g

Adapted from [www.cookforyourlife.org](http://www.cookforyourlife.org) | Submitted by Robin LaCroix, RD, CSO

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Soothing Spice-Infused Milk

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 cup

## Ingredients

- 1 cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛-¼ teaspoon ground ginger, to taste
- ⅛-¼ teaspoon ground turmeric, to taste
- 2 teaspoons sugar-based sweetener (e.g. sugar, honey, maple syrup)

## Directions

1. In a microwave-safe mug or a small saucepan, add the milk, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, and sweetener.
2. Microwave in the mug on High power (default setting) or heat in the saucepan on the stovetop over medium-high heat until warmed to your liking, about 1-2 minutes in the microwave or 3-5 minutes on the stovetop.
3. Stir with a spoon or a whisk.
4. Serve warm and sip slowly, or chill in the refrigerator and serve cold if this feels better on your throat.

## Recipe Notes

- If you need extra calories, use whole milk or a high-fat non-dairy milk (e.g. full-fat coconut milk).

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 170 | Total Fat: 5 g | Saturated Fat: 3 g  
Sodium: 120 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 24 g | Dietary Fiber: 0.5 g | Protein: 8 g**

Adapted from LifeCurrentsBlog.com | Submitted by Robin LaCroix, RD, CSO

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# Maple-Peanut Butter Oatmeal

Prep: 5 minutes | Cook: 5 minutes | Total: 10 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 cup

## Ingredients

½ cup old fashioned (rolled) oats

½ cup water

½ cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)

1 tablespoon maple syrup

1 tablespoon peanut butter

2 pitted dates, chopped

## Directions

1. Add the oats, water, milk, maple syrup, peanut butter, and dates to a small saucepan.
2. Place the saucepan over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer, then reduce heat to medium.
3. Cook, stirring often, until the oats are creamy and tender, about 5 minutes.
4. Remove from heat and let sit to cool slightly, about 2-3 minutes, then serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- Another nut or seed butter (e.g. peanut butter, sunflower butter, almond butter, cashew butter) can be substituted for the peanut butter.
- Try this oatmeal topped with sliced bananas and plain Greek yogurt
- Serve with additional milk as desired.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 400 | Total Fat: 13 g | Saturated Fat: 3.5 g  
Sodium: 140 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 63 g | Dietary Fiber: 6.5 g | Protein: 13 g**

Submitted by Robin LaCroix, RD, CSO

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# Stovetop Chicken Broth

Prep: 25 minutes | Cook: 1 hour | Total: 1 hour 25 minutes

Yield: 8 servings | Serving Size: 1 cup

## Ingredients

3 pounds raw bone-in chicken thighs, drumsticks, backs, and/or wings  
1 tablespoon canola oil or avocado oil  
1 medium or large onion, roughly chopped  
8 cups drinking-quality water  
2 bay leaves

## Directions

1. (Optional) Hack the chicken into 2-inch pieces using a meat cleaver. This will expose the bone marrow for a more flavorful stock in less time.
2. Heat a large stockpot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add half of the chicken pieces and cook until lightly browned on both sides, about 5 minutes. Transfer the browned chicken pieces to a large bowl. Repeat with the second half of the chicken pieces.
4. Add the onion to the fat left in the pot and cook until softened, about 3-5 minutes.
5. Return the browned chicken pieces and any accumulated juices to the pot.
6. Cover the pot with a lid and reduce the heat to low. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the chicken has released its juices, about 20 minutes.
7. Add the water and bay leaves.
8. Bring the water to a boil, then reduce the heat to a gentle simmer.
9. Cover with a lid and cook, skimming as needed, until the broth tastes rich and flavorful, about 20-30 minutes.
10. Strain the broth through a fine-mesh strainer.
11. Let the broth settle for 5-10 minutes, then remove any fat on the surface using a wide shallow spoon or fat separator.
12. Refrigerate for up to 4 days or freeze up to 6 months.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 30 | Total Fat: 0.5 g | Saturated Fat: 0.5 g  
Sodium: 125 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 2 g | Dietary Fiber: 0 g | Protein: 4 g**

Adapted from America's Test Kitchen | Submitted by Dana Herring MS, RDN

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Slow Cooker Bone Broth

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 24 hours | Total: 24 hours 15 minutes

Yield: 16 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

3-4 pounds roasted beef bones (e.g. oxtail, marrow, knuckles, short rib) or roasted chicken bones (from about 12-14 pounds whole chicken, or 3-5 rotisserie chickens)

2 medium carrots, roughly chopped (about 1 cup)

3 stalks celery, roughly chopped (about 1 cup)

2 medium onion, roughly chopped (about 3-4 cups)

2 bay leaves

2 tablespoons vinegar (e.g. white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, rice vinegar, red wine vinegar)

1 tablespoon black peppercorns or ground black pepper

8-12 cups cold or room temperature drinking-quality water

## Directions

1. Place the bones, carrots, celery, onion, bay leaves, vinegar and peppercorns into the pot of a 6-quart slow cooker.
2. Add water to completely cover the other ingredients.
3. Cover the slow cooker with a lid.
4. Set the slow cooker to cook on low for the longest amount of time it will allow, for a total cook time of 24 hours. Throughout cooking, add more water as needed to keep all the ingredients covered in water and skim the foam off the top with a large spoon as you notice it.
5. Discard all solids and carefully pour the broth through a fine-mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth into a large bowl.
6. Ladle the bone broth into storage containers and let it cool to room temperature.
7. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 6 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months. Before using, skim off any fat on the surface.

## Recipe Notes

- Keep the bones in a plastic ziptop bag in the freezer until you are ready to make broth.
- This may take 2-3 cooking cycles. Set a timer to remind yourself when you need to set the next cooking cycle.
- Beef bones may be available in the meat section or from the butcher counter at your local grocery store. If you cannot find them there, look at a butcher shop.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 45 | Total Fat: 0.5 g | Saturated Fat: 0.5 g  
Sodium: 90 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 0 g | Dietary Fiber: 0 g | Protein: 10 g**

Adapted from [StreetSmartKitchen.com](http://StreetSmartKitchen.com) | Submitted by Dana Herring MS, RDN

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Pressure Cooker Bone Broth

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 1 hour 20 minutes | Total: 1 hour 35 minutes

Yield: 16 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

2-2½ pounds roasted beef bones (e.g. oxtail, marrow, knuckles, short rib) or roasted chicken bones (from about 6-7 pounds whole chicken, or 2-3 rotisserie chickens)

6 medium carrots, roughly chopped (about 3 cups)

6 stalks celery, roughly chopped (about 2 cups)

1 medium onion, roughly chopped (about 1½-2 cups)

4 cloves garlic, smashed

6 sprigs fresh rosemary (or 2 teaspoons dried rosemary)

6 sprigs fresh thyme (or ½ teaspoon dried thyme)

1 tablespoon black peppercorns or ground black pepper

2 tablespoons vinegar (e.g. white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, rice vinegar, red wine vinegar)

12 cups cold or room temperature drinking-quality water

## Directions

1. To a 6-quart pressure cooker pot, add the beef or chicken bones, carrots, celery, onion, garlic, rosemary, thyme, peppercorns, vinegar, and water. Stir to combine.
2. Place a stovetop pressure cooker over medium-high heat or set an electric pressure cooker to high heat sauté. Bring to a boil.
3. Cook until any foam with debris comes to the surface, then carefully skim this off the top with a large spoon.
4. Lock the lid onto the pressure cooker and turn the pressure valve to seal.
5. Lock the lid in place and close the pressure valve. For a stovetop cooker, bring to pressure over high heat and then reduce to low heat. Set an electric pressure cooker to high pressure. Cook for 60 minutes, with the time starting after the pressure has built up.
6. Turn off the heat and turn the pressure valve to vent to release the pressure. Once the pressure is completely released, carefully open the lid, allowing the steam to escape away from you.
7. Discard all solids and carefully pour the broth through a fine-mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth into a large bowl.
8. Ladle the bone broth into storage containers and let it cool to room temperature.
9. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 6 days or in the freezer for up to 6 months. Before using, skim off any fat on the surface.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 45 | Total Fat: 0.5 g | Saturated Fat: 0.5 g  
Sodium: 90 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 0 g | Dietary Fiber: 0 g | Protein: 6 g**

Adapted from Tasty.com | Submitted by Dana Herring MS, RDN

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