Article Series Nutrition

7 smoothie and soup recipes for when you’re having trouble swallowing

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People living with cancer may sometimes have problems with swallowing, which is known as dysphagia. Certain cancers and side effects of some treatments can affect the mouth and throat, making it difficult to chew and swallow food. In some cases, the cancer might block the movement of food down the throat.

The good news is that there are ways to help you stay nourished while enjoying delicious food, even if you’re not able to chew and swallow as well as before. Here are some **Microsteps** and recipes you can try to help make food easier to chew and swallow. As always, consult with your care team for the guidance and recommendations that are best for you.

Swapping solid or raw foods for their cooked, blended, and softer counterparts.

For example, try mashed potatoes instead of roasted potatoes, blend cooked vegetables into a creamy soup, or replace fresh fruit with smooth applesauce or a yogurt-based smoothie.

Staying hydrated with thicker liquids, purees, and other water-rich foods.

Thin liquids can sometimes be difficult to swallow. Instead, opt for creamy soups, pureed fruits, or other hydrating options such as flavored gelatin treats or popsicles.

Adding a moisture-rich sauce or broth to your meal.

Try adding moisture to your dish with a sauce, broth, milk, or gravy. For example, if you’re having rice, stir in a few spoonfuls of warm low-sodium broth, drizzle with olive oil, or top with a flavorful tomato sauce. This may make it easier to chew and swallow.

Making smoothies a daily habit.

Smoothies are a great way to use up any fruits or vegetables that may go bad soon. They also offer a quick and easy way to pack in some extra nutrients. You can add Greek yogurt, hemp seeds, almond butter, banana, a handful of soft oats or a scoop of your favorite protein powder.

If you’re having a hard time swallowing, there are many foods that may help you maintain your nutrition, weight and strength. Here are some recipes that can add flavor and variety to your diet.

Sneaky Strawberry Milkshake

Servings: 1-2

What you’ll need:

- ½ cup frozen riced cauliflower
- 1 cup frozen strawberries
- ½ cup milk of your choice
- ½ cup full-fat coconut milk
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- Optional: 1 scoop protein powder of choice
- Optional: 1-2 tablespoons honey
- Optional: Ice

Directions:

1. Combine all the ingredients in a blender: cauliflower, strawberries, milk, coconut milk, and cinnamon. For a boost of protein, add a scoop of your favorite protein powder. For a sweeter taste, add honey.
2. Blend on high until smooth and creamy.
3. For a thicker consistency, add ice; for a thinner consistency, add more milk.

Energy-Supporting Smoothie

Servings: 1

What you’ll need:

- 1⁄4 cup unsweetened Greek yogurt
- 1⁄2 cup milk of your choice
- 6 frozen strawberries
- 1⁄2 cup chopped frozen spinach
- 2 tablespoons almond butter or peanut butter
- Optional: ½ - 1 ripe banana
- Optional: Ice

Directions:

1. Add the yogurt and milk to the blender and then add the rest of the ingredients. For a sweeter taste, add the banana.
2. Add more milk or ice, depending on how thick you like your smoothie.
3. Blend on high until smooth.

Fall Cauliflower Soup

Servings: 3

What you'll need:

- 1 cauliflower head, cut into small pieces
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups vegetable broth or chicken broth
- 1 (13.5- ounce) can unsweetened coconut milk (or other milk of your choice)
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon salt

Directions:

1. Add the oil to a large pot over medium heat.
2. Add the cauliflower pieces. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender (around 6-10 minutes, depending on the size of your pieces).
3. Stir in the broth, coconut milk, garlic powder and salt. Cook for another 10-12 minutes until the soup is warm.
4. If using a blender, puree the soup in batches. If using a hand blender, you can puree until smooth directly in the pot.

Cinnamon Pumpkin Seed Smoothie

Servings: 1-2

What you'll need:

- 1/4 cup pumpkin seeds (unsalted)
- 2 bananas
- Large pinch of cinnamon (more or less to taste)
- Pinch of salt
- A few ice cubes
- 1 can (15 oz) unsweetened coconut milk

Directions:

1. Add the pumpkin seeds to a high-powered blender.
2. Peel the bananas and break them into the blender.
3. Add the cinnamon, salt, ice cubes and can of coconut milk.
4. Blend on high for 1-2 minutes or until you reach a smooth texture.
5. Pour into glasses and sprinkle with cinnamon to serve.

UpBeet Smoothie

Servings: 1-2

What you'll need:

- 1 medium sized beet (peeled and diced or quartered)*
- 1 orange
- 1 cup coconut water
- 1 frozen banana
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- Optional: 1/2 inch fresh ginger, peeled

- Optional: handful of baby kale

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a blender and blend on high until completely smooth.
2. Add more coconut water if desired for a smoother consistency.

**If you're not using a high-powered blender, finely grate or steam the beets to make them easier to blend.*

Creamy Cucumber Avocado Gazpacho

Servings: 6

What you'll need:

- 2 cucumbers, chopped
- 2 avocados
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 tbsp cilantro
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½-3/4 cup full fat coconut milk
- 1 tsp paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Place all items in a large blender and blend on low until very smooth.
2. Add ¼ cup extra coconut milk for a creamier consistency.
3. Transfer to a covered container and chill for 2 hours or more before serving.

Creamy Chocolate Shake

Servings: 1-2

What you'll need:

- 2 tbsp cocoa or cacao powder
- 1⁄2 cup coconut milk (Optional: For creamier texture, freeze coconut milk overnight prior to blending.)
- 1 green banana, frozen
- 1 tbsp creamy nut butter
- 1⁄2 avocado
- Dash of sea salt
- Optional: Ice

Directions:

1. Combine all of the ingredients in the blender. Blend on high until smooth.
2. For a creamier texture, add more nut butter; for a thinner consistency, add more coconut milk or other milk of choice; for a thicker consistency, add more ice.

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