

Information about

Throat Irritation

Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)

You may feel that your throat is dry or itchy, or it may feel as if there is something sticking in your throat, such as thick mucus or catarrh (phlegm).

One of the best ways to make your throat feel better is to drink more:

- Take small sips of water little and often throughout the day;
- Try a motivational water bottle.
- Reduce how much caffeine you drink e.g. coffee, tea, cola, energy drinks. Caffeine can be drying on your throat.
- Aim for 6–8 glasses of non-caffeinated fluid e.g. water, squash, herbal tea.
- Try drinking warm fruit juices, lemon or lime water and decaffeinated tea to help reduce congestion.
- Fresh pineapple and fresh papaya juice are especially good at thinning out thick and sticky mucus.
- Try reducing dairy products from your diet as these can increase mucus in your throat.



Other ways to loosen mucus include:

- Inhaling steam. Try to inhale steam 8–10 times a day e.g. in the bath; over pans whilst cooking; whilst ironing etc., inhaling steam from a cup when taking hot drinks or from a mug of hot water
- You could trial a steam inhaler cup
- Or buy a Dr Nelson's inhaler.
- Sucking on a sugar free sweet to keep your mouth and throat moist. Avoid menthol lozenges that can have a drying effect.
- Add moisture to your rooms by putting shallow bowls of water on top of your radiators or using a table top humidifier in very dry rooms.



Ways to help with mucus at the back of the nose include:

- A steroid nasal spray from your GP to help a constant runny nose.
- Saline nasal (saltwater) rinses at home to ease nasal congestion (use 3-4 times per day)

Help moisten your mouth by:

- Using a fine water spray into your mouth; this can be especially useful at night if you sleep with your mouth open, to prevent drying out.
- Saliva replacement gels for night time e.g. Biotene Oral Balance Gel.
- Special mouthwashes, toothpastes and chewing gums that help to keep moisture in your mouth.
- Certain lozenges that add moisture to your mouth e.g. Salivix pastilles.



If you have problems with your chest e.g. asthma, try:

- Using saline nebulisers.
- Using a spacer when taking your inhalers.
- Rinsing your mouth, gargling and, or inhaling steam after taking inhalers.



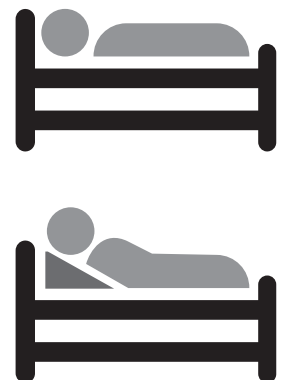
If the irritation in your throat is caused by a cough, your ENT specialist may give you cough suppression ways including:

- Taking sips of water and swallowing instead of coughing
- Breathing exercises

If you feel stomach acid coming up into your throat or your mouth, causing a sour bitter taste or a burning sensation after eating, you could try an alginate (antacids) medication such as Gaviscon or Peptac to ease symptoms. You need to take these at least 20 minutes after food and at least 20 minutes before lying down.

Often the best advice is to make **changes** to your **lifestyle**:

- Limit spicy foods
- Don't eat within 3 hours of going to bed
- Try to sleep on your left side
- Raise the head of the bed. A bed with legs can be simply lifted 6-8 inches at night by placing books or wooden blocks under the legs at the head end. This may not be possible if you have a mattress on a frame. In that case, it might be helpful to consider purchasing a **mattress topping anti reflux wedge**. These cost about £30 and are available from on-line retailers. One example trade name is the Wedgehog. This might help limit mucus gathering in the throat overnight, as well as reducing movement of stomach content up the gullet into the throat while you are asleep
- Try to lose weight if you are overweight (see  www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator for your healthy BMI).



Other lifestyle changes for managing stomach acid include:

- Stop smoking.
- Reduce your intake of caffeine and fizzy drinks.
- Reduce your fat intake and limit intake of red meat, butter, cheese, eggs, fried food and chocolate.
- Eat smaller meals.
- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink, especially white wine and spirits.
- Bend from the knees not the waist
- Avoid tight fitting underwear, skirts or trousers

Medications can also have a drying effect on your throat; your GP might be able to change your medication. It is important not to stop any medications without medical advice. Medications with a drying effect include anti-depressants, statins, hyoscine, atropine and some blood pressure tablets. Drinking more and inhaling steam can be helpful in reducing the drying side effects from such medications.

Medications that can help with throat dryness include:

- Mucolytics such as Mucodyne – these break down protein in mucoid secretions

Non- prescription products from health food stores that may help include:

- Bromelain (the enzyme in fresh pineapple)
- Papain tablets or Papaya plus (or papaya fruit).

🌐 <https://www.britishvoiceassociation.org.uk/> has free literature with advice on voice care.

