

Mouth Care with Cancer Treatment

Cancer treatments can damage cells in the mouth. This may cause problems with teeth and gums, the lining of the mouth, and the glands that make saliva. See a dentist 2 weeks before starting cancer treatment.

Problems may include:

- Soreness in the mouth
- Sores like cold or canker sores
- Burning, peeling, dry mouth and swelling of the tongue
- A risk of infection
- Trouble with eating, drinking, swallowing, talking or sleeping.

To reduce discomfort:

- **Check your mouth each day.**
 - Call your doctor or nurse if you see redness, swelling, open areas, bleeding or white patches.
- **Keep your mouth clean.**
 - Brush your teeth or dentures after meals and before bedtime.
 - Use an extra soft toothbrush with toothpaste.
 - If your mouth is too sore to use a soft toothbrush, use gauze or sponge toothettes soaked in salt water to clean your teeth.
- **Floss your teeth gently each day.**
 - Use unwaxed dental floss.
 - Do not floss areas that are sore or bleeding.
- **Use a mouthwash after meals and at bedtime.**
 - Buy a mouthwash that does not have alcohol or mix one cup of warm water with two pinches ($\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon) of baking soda and one pinch ($\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon) of salt. Rinse and spit out. Do not swallow.
 - Follow with a plain water rinse.
- **Keep your mouth moist.**
- Drink 8 to 12 glasses of liquids each day.
- Apply lip balm to avoid cracked lips.
- Suck on ice chips.
- Chew gum or use hard candy.
- Talk to your doctor if your mouth is very dry.

- **Remove and clean dentures each time you brush your teeth after you eat.**
 - › Rinse your mouth with mouthwash before putting them back in your mouth.
 - › Keep your dentures in clean water when you are not wearing them.
 - › Talk to your doctor or dentist about dentures that do not fit.
- **Use medicines to manage mouth discomfort and pain as ordered by your doctor.**
- **Avoid:**
 - › Acidic foods and juices such as oranges, tomatoes and grapefruits
 - › Hot foods such as soup, coffee or tea
 - › Spicy foods
 - › Pickled foods
 - › Rough foods such as nuts, crackers or pretzels
 - › All tobacco products
 - › Alcohol

Talk to your dentist, doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.