

Oral Care During Cancer Treatment

Before starting cancer treatment, teeth should be checked by a dentist.

Cancer treatments can cause mouth and teeth problems. Ask your care team if you should make any changes to your daily oral hygiene (practice of keeping the mouth healthy, e.g., brushing) routine.

During Cancer Treatment, You May Experience:

- A dry or burning feeling in the mouth
- Painful sores in the mouth
- Bleeding gums
- Thrush (white patches) in the mouth
- Changes in taste and/or appetite (hunger)
- Dental (tooth) decay
- Trouble swallowing



How to Care for the Mouth During Treatments:

- Practice daily oral hygiene at least twice a day
- Use an ultra soft toothbrush
- Rinse your mouth with a baking soda and water mixture (e.g., ¼ tsp baking soda in 1 cup of water) or prescription mouth rinse
- After taking liquid medicine, brush your teeth because some have sugar in them
- After vomiting, rinse the mouth with water and wait 30 minutes before brushing
- Rinse the mouth with a warm salt water rinse (e.g., ½ tsp of salt in ½ cup of water) as needed.
- Use saliva substitutes (products that help with dry mouth) as needed
- Visit oral health professionals (e.g., dentist, dental hygienist, denturist) more often

When to Seek Care:

- If mouth pain or discomfort does not get better
- If pain, sores, white patches, swelling, or bleeding in the mouth last more than 2 weeks
- Trouble eating, drinking, and/or speaking

Tips:

- Avoid sugary drinks and snacks
- Avoid spicy, acidic or hard crunchy foods
- Be careful with fruit drinks and candies because they have sugar and acid that can hurt the teeth
- Drink milk or water instead of tea or coffee because they can cause dry mouth

Examples of Saliva Substitutes:



Ice Chips



Gels & Sprays



Sugar-Free Gum



Humidifier

