

MOUTH CARE

Certain chemotherapy drugs as well as radiation therapy may cause an inflammation of the cells lining the mucous membranes of the mouth. These conditions are called stomatitis and oral mucositis. Severity varies from patient to patient. One of the earliest symptoms is sensitivity to heat and cold.

Stomatitis and Oral Mucositis Symptoms

- Your mouth may feel sore.
- Sores may appear on your lips or inside your mouth.
- Gums may bleed.
- White (cottage cheese-like) patches may indicate a fungal infection, which requires medication. Notify your physician or nurse if this occurs.

Good mouth care helps keep your mouth healthy so you can talk, eat, and avoid the pain that teeth and gum problems cause. Schedule dental visits before beginning chemotherapy and or radiation therapy. Side effects often happen because a person's mouth is not healthy before starting treatment. By taking good care of your mouth, you can help prevent complications such as infection. When your mouth feels good, you will be able to eat properly and ensure that you're getting the nutrition you need.

Mouth Care

- Report your sore mouth to your nurse or member of your health team.
- Always use a soft toothbrush and baking soda toothpaste. (You can soften your toothbrush with hot water.)
- Rinsing with salt and baking soda in warm water several times a day cleanses the mouth.
- Avoid using dental floss if it causes pain or bleeding.
- If you wear dentures, wear them only when you eat.
- Avoid tobacco and alcohol; they irritate sensitive tissue.
- If dental work is necessary during treatment, be sure to have your oncologist and dentist collaborate about your cancer and dental treatment plans.

During the Day

- Rinse your mouth with baking soda solution ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda in 1 cup water), Peridex mouth wash or warm salt water.(Avoid commercial mouthwashes that contain alcohol. They will irritate the mucous membranes and worsen your symptoms.)
- Keep your mouth moist by continually sipping on water, juices and other fluids.
- Drink 6-8 oz glasses of water per day.
- Keep your lips well lubricated with a lip balm, moisturizer or petroleum jelly.
- Chew or suck on sugarless gum, sugar-free candy or ice chips.
- Ask your physician about saliva substitute to help moisten your mouth. Dry mouth (xerostomia) often occurs during radiation therapy.
- Do not use toothpicks.

Foods to Choose if you have a Sore Mouth

- Eat soft, moist foods that are easy to chew and swallow
 - cooked cereals
 - mashed potatoes
 - scrambled eggs
 - puddings and custards
 - soups
 - pasta
 - jello
- Soften foods with gravy, sauces, broth, yogurt, or other liquids.
- Take small bites, chew slowly, and sip liquids during meals.

Foods to Avoid if you have a Sore Mouth

- Hot foods: cold or room temperature foods are generally less irritating.
- Highly acidic foods such as tomatoes and citrus fruits and juices.
- Sharp, crunchy foods that could scrape or cut your mouth such as potato or taco chips.
- Spicy, hot foods.
- Sugary foods that can cause cavities.

Call during Office Hours if

- Pain or soreness in the mouth or throat
- Dry mouth or redness
- Cracks, blisters, ulcers white patches
- Difficulty swallowing
- Changes in nutritional intake
- Diarrhea
- Tooth decay
- Change in taste

Call Your Physician Anytime if

- Temperature above 100.5-F
- Bleeding from the mouth