

MOUTH CARE DURING CANCER TREATMENT

The mouth and throat are often affected by cancer treatment. Cells that line the mouth and throat constantly divide and replace cells that have been damaged by the digestive process. Cancer treatments frequently interfere with the normal growth of mouth and throat cells. Your mouth may become dry and irritated, you may have difficulty swallowing, or you may develop mouth sores.



Below are mouth care instructions to prevent or reduce these problems.

Mouth Care Instructions

Before starting your cancer therapy:

- ▶ See your dentist for a check-up. Tell your dentist you are going to begin treatment for cancer.
- ▶ It is very important to start brushing your teeth, gums, and tongue after each meal and at bedtime. Floss your teeth (with unwaxed dental floss or tape) twice a day.

During chemotherapy or radiation therapy:

- ▶ Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue after each meal and at bedtime. This will help keep bacteria out of these areas and prevent infection. You may use any type of toothpaste. If your gums become sore, use a soft toothbrush or a Water Pic.
- ▶ Floss twice a day, unless your doctor or nurse advises otherwise. Use unwaxed dental floss or tape. (Dental tape is less damaging to the gums than floss.) Do not floss if your gums are bleeding.
- ▶ Rinse your mouth after each meal and at bedtime. There are several rinses you may use:
 - a teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of warm water
 - a teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of warm water
 - 4 ounces of club soda

Swish and gargle the solution for 30 seconds to 1 minute then spit it out.

Do not use commercial mouthwashes. These contain alcohol and are very drying to the mouth.

- ▶ Avoid foods that may burn the lining of your mouth, such as very hot foods or spicy foods.
- ▶ If you wear dentures, remove and brush them within 30 minutes of eating and at bedtime. Soak in 1.5% (half-strength) hydrogen peroxide or commercial denture cleanser daily.

If you begin to have a sore mouth, trouble swallowing, or develop sores or white patches in your mouth tell your doctor or nurse.