

PENJAGAAN MULUT SEMASA MENJALANI RAWATAN

Cancer treatments can cause changes to the sensitive structures of the mouth. This factsheet covers general advice on how to care for your mouth during treatment. It also covers some expected side effects of cancer treatments that can occur in the mouth and what you can do to help prevent or reduce them.

1. Before Cancer Treatment: See Your Dentist

- Mouth care during cancer treatment is important. Problems associated with your mouth can interrupt your cancer treatment schedule.
- Most mouth infections, including gum disease, are due to common micro-organisms that exist normally in your mouth.
- Check your mouth and teeth to ensure any mouth or tooth problems are corrected.
- Visit your dentist for regular check-ups. Contact them if a problem occurs.
- Let the dentist know the names of all the medications you take. This includes medicines you do not take on a regular basis, over the counter medications, natural remedies and any injections you receive.
- When your treatment has started, let your dentist know the names of cancer treatments you are receiving and any special instructions you have been given.
- If you are having chemotherapy and need to have dental work done discuss this with your treatment team. In some cases the timing of your dental work needs to be planned.

2. How can you care for your mouth?

Follow these simple instructions. It is important to look in your mouth and be familiar with what it looks like and to report any problems straight away. Mouth care can help prevent tooth decay, sores in the mouth and gum disease.

2.1. Tooth and gum care

- Brush your teeth and tongue gently and thoroughly after meals and at bedtime by using an extra-soft toothbrush with high fluoride toothpaste.
- Replace your toothbrush every three months or sooner.
- Ensure you brush along the gum line of all your teeth.
- If your mouth is very sore, or you experience bleeding gums, soften the bristles of your toothbrush in warm water prior to brushing.
- Don't stop brushing your teeth. Report any problems to your doctor or nurse.

CARING FOR YOUR MOUTH DURING CANCER TREATMENT

- If you feel nauseous, brush your teeth when you feel you are able to.
- If normal toothpastes are too harsh, a children's toothpaste or gel may be milder. If using low fluoride toothpaste, use a topical fluoride solution after brushing.
- Whenever possible floss your teeth once a day to remove plaque.
- To reduce the tooth decay, avoid sipping carbonated water and drinks containing sugar.
- Choose sugar-free chewing gums and lollies if needed.

2.2. Denture care

- Brush denture daily with water, soap, a mildly abrasive toothpaste or denture paste. Soak the dentures in a cleaning solution, such as bleach or vinegar once a week (bleach solution: 1 part bleach to 4 parts water) or (vinegar solution: ½ vinegar and ½ water).
- Remove your denture or plate from your mouth for cleaning.
- Rinse the denture under water after meals to remove food debris completely.
- Scouring powders or other abrasive cleaners should not be used because they scratch the denture.
- Remove your dentures or dental plate overnight and if bleeding occurs.

2.3. Lip care

Use aloe, vitamin E or lip balm with UV protection on dry lips. Vaseline should not be used as it may promote bacterial growth.

2.4. Quit smoking

- People who quit smoking or quit using tobacco products have fewer mouth problems.
- Ask your cancer care team to help you stop smoking or using tobacco products.

3. Dealing with mouth problems

3.1. Sore mouth / sore throat

- Use an antibacterial mouth wash if it is too uncomfortable to brush your teeth.
- Do not use mouthwashes containing alcohol. Ask your dentist or nurse to recommend alcohol free alternatives.
- A soothing everyday mouth wash can be made with ¼ teaspoon of salt and ¼ teaspoon baking soda in 1 cup of warm water. This can be used as often as you need.
- Ask your cancer care team about medicines that can help with the pain.
- Choose soft, easy-to-chew foods; lukewarm foods and drinks instead of hot or icy-cold.
- Avoid alcoholic drinks, spicy, sour, crunchy foods or any foods or drinks that irritate your mouth.

3.2. Dry mouth / thick saliva

- Keep your lips and mouth moist.
- Sip water frequently or suck small chips of ice.
- Suck sugar-free sweets or chew sugar-free gum.
- Cut or mince foods.
- Moisten foods with gravies, sauces or butter.
- Drink fluids while eating.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Use artificial saliva; ask your nurse or dentist.

3.3. Furry tongue

Brush your tongue with a soft toothbrush after meals and at bed time.

3.4. Vomiting

Rinse your mouth after vomiting with water or ¼ teaspoon of baking soda in 1 cup of warm water.

4. When should you call your treatment team about mouth problems?

Look in your mouth. Not all mouth problems cause pain. Call your cancer team if you notice any changes you are not sure about, if an old problem gets worse or when you first notice a problem on the following list:

- Red/white patches in your mouth;
- Ulcers in your mouth;
- Exposed bone in the jaws;
- Pain in your mouth;
- Difficulty eating and drinking;
- Stiffening of the chewing muscles;
- Bleeding in your mouth;
- Lumps in the mouth.

For further information

If you or your dentist has any questions or if you experience complications you are unsure of during or following treatment, contact your treatment team. You may require a referral to the dental clinic.