

# Oral Care During Treatment

**What can I do to keep my mouth healthy during treatment?** You can do a lot to keep your mouth healthy during chemotherapy. The first step is to see a dentist before you start cancer treatment. Once your treatment starts, it's important to look in your mouth every day for sores or other changes. These tips can help prevent and treat a sore mouth:

## Keep your mouth moist

- Drink a lot of water.
- Suck on ice chips.
- Use sugarless gum or sugar-free hard candy.
- Use a saliva substitute to help moisten your mouth.

## Clean your mouth, tongue, and gums

- Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue with an extra-soft toothbrush after every meal and at bedtime. If brushing hurts, soften the bristles in warm water.
- Let your toothbrush air dry between brushings.
- Use a toothpaste with fluoride.
- Rinse your mouth four times a day with a salt and baking soda solution. (Mix one-half teaspoon salt and one-half teaspoon baking soda in 8 ounces of water.) Follow with a plain water rinse.
- Do not use mouth rinses that contain alcohol. Try Oracoat's Renewing Melts for temporary relief of minor surface pain in the mouth.
- Floss your teeth gently every day. If your gums bleed or hurt, continue to floss but avoid the areas that are bleeding or sore.
- Use your regular lip care products to keep your lips from drying and cracking. Tell your doctor if you develop new mouth sores or pain.
- Dentures that don't fit can cause problems. Talk to your cancer doctor or dentist about your dentures.
- Limit food and drinks that contain sugar.

## Tips for People Who Wear Dentures, Plates, or Other Dental Products

- If you wear dentures, put them in only when you are eating. Continue this for the first three to four weeks after your chemotherapy.
- Remove dentures or dental plates and brush them with a soft toothbrush.
- Do not wear dentures or dental plates that do not fit well. Call your dentist to have them adjusted.
- Do not wear your dentures or dental plates while sleeping.
- Brush and clean dentures and dental plates twice a day in effervescent denture cleansers. Rinse them well before wearing them.
- To kill germs, soak your dentures in an antibacterial solution when you are not wearing them. Do the same with other mouth appliances.

**If your mouth is sore, watch what you eat and drink**

- Choose foods that are good for you and easy to chew and swallow.
- Take small bites of food, chew slowly, and sip liquids with your meals.
- Eat soft, moist foods such as cooked cereals, mashed potatoes, cottage cheese, tender stews, and scrambled eggs.
- If you have trouble swallowing, soften your food with gravy, sauces, broth, yogurt, or other liquids.

**Stay away from things that might irritate your mouth, such as:**

- Hard, coarse, crunchy foods such as taco chips that could scrape or cut your mouth
- Hot, spicy, or acidic foods such as citrus fruits and juices
- Sugary foods and drinks, such as candy or soda, which could cause cavities
- Toothpicks, because they can cut your mouth
- All tobacco products – cigarettes, e-cigarettes, pipes, snuff, and chewing tobacco
- Alcoholic drinks
- Mouthwashes containing alcohol

**Contact our clinic if you:**

- Have mouth redness, soreness, or pain
- Have cracks in your lips
- Have mouth ulcers or blisters
- See white patches in your mouth or on your tongue
- Experience mouth, tongue, or throat “burning”

If you develop mouth sores causing discomfort and/or decreased ability to eat or drink, please call the clinic immediately at 214-645-HOPE (4673), or toll free at 866-460-HOPE (4673). If it is after 5 p.m. or on a weekend, our physician on-call will contact you.

**214-645-HOPE (4673) or 866-460-HOPE (4673)**



**Homemade Mouth Rinse**

- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 8 oz. water, warm or cool

Mix all ingredients together until baking soda and salt dissolve.

Do not drink the solution.

Swish in your mouth, and then spit.

Use this mouthwash before and after eating, between meals, and before bed.

*Adapted from: NIH Publication No. 13-4361, “Chemotherapy and Your Mouth,” August 2013. American Dietetic Association, Oral Care patient education handout.*