

## OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

To manage dry mouth:

- Take frequent sips of water
- Carry water with you and keep water bedside
- Drink frequently while eating
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and tobacco
- Use a humidifier at night
- Suck (do not chew) on sugarless hard candies
- Chew sugar-free gum

Look for gums and mints sweetened with Xylitol to help stimulate saliva and prevent decay. Introduce Xylitol slowly into your routine to avoid a laxative effect.

Avoid anything with high acid levels such as soft drinks, citric fruits and juices to protect delicate tissue and teeth.

To prevent decay, limit your intake of sweet, sticky and sugary foods.

Suck (do not chew) on ice chips before and during chemotherapy. This reduces blood flow to the tissues, reducing your risks of oral side effects from the medications.

Inform your dentist and oncologist and stop chewing gum if you experience soreness or tightness in your jaws, restricted opening of your mouth or frequent headaches.

\*\*\*The information contained herein is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not medical advice and not intended as a substitute for the advice and treatment of a licensed medical professional.\*\*\*

## ABOUT US

Side Effect Support LLC is dedicated to improving the oral health and overall well-being of those fighting cancer.

We offer professional education to medical and dental staffs to improve patient care. We also deal directly with patients to serve the unique needs that they may face during chemotherapy or head & neck radiation.

We provide a convenient source for therapeutic products along with valuable information to help manage many of the oral side effects of cancer treatments.

Be an active participant in your care.

Visit us online @  
**[www.sideeffectsupport.com](http://www.sideeffectsupport.com)**



**Side Effect Support LLC**

Assistance On The Road To Recovery

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# CANCER TREATMENTS AND ORAL HEALTH

Many health problems and their treatments can negatively affect your mouth. Those receiving chemotherapy or radiation to the head and neck region can experience significant changes in their oral health. Keeping your mouth healthy is not only important for your comfort but can also prevent infection and possible complications or delays in your cancer treatments.

The following information, along with products available at [sideeffectsupport.com](http://sideeffectsupport.com), can help manage some of the oral side effects that you may experience. Your dental and oncology teams can work with you to prevent and treat many oral complications that may arise to help make your journey towards recovery more comfortable.



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## **DRY MOUTH (XEROSTOMIA)**

Dry mouth, which is a common side effect of cancer treatments, can lead to tooth decay, periodontal disease and infections. There are several over-the-counter products to relieve dry mouth. Keeping your mouth moist will help protect your teeth and gum tissue as well as aid in tasting, swallowing, speaking and your overall comfort.

## **MOUTH SORES (ORAL MUCOSITIS)**

Some people may experience mouth sores during treatments. This can depend on the type of treatments used, the dosage and duration. Mouth sores can be minimized, or possibly avoided in some cases, by seeing your dentist prior to treatments to resolve any existing dental issues and remove potential sources of irritation in your mouth. Good oral hygiene and keeping your mouth moist can also help to reduce mouth sores.

## **BRUSHING**

Changes to your normal brushing habits may be necessary to effectively remove plaque and protect your teeth from decay and infection.

Use an extra soft toothbrush with a small, compact head. Brush 3-4 times each day for 2-3 minutes, especially following meals. Use small, circular strokes and avoid vigorous horizontal brushing. Rinse the brush in hot water every 15-30 seconds to soften bristles if necessary. If it is not possible to brush immediately after eating, swish with water as soon as possible.

If your gums bleed easily and your blood counts are low, wipe plaque off of teeth, inside of cheeks and tongue with warm, moist gauze wrapped around your finger to avoid potential trauma and infection.

## **TOOTHPASTE**

Most toothpastes contain the foaming agent Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS.). Avoid toothpaste with SLS, peroxide, tartar control, and whitening ingredients as they may cause irritation to sensitive tissues in your mouth.

## **FLOSSING**

Consult your dental professional to ensure that you are using the proper flossing technique, which is vital to effectively remove plaque between your teeth while avoiding trauma to your gum tissue. Your oncologist will advise you if you should avoid flossing, which may be necessary if your blood counts are low and your gum tissue bleeds easily.

## **MOUTHWASH**

Avoid mouthwash containing alcohol, phenol or peroxide. These ingredients can be too harsh for oral tissues that are delicate due to the effects of cancer treatments. There are several over-the-counter mouthwashes made for dry mouth. Diluting mouthwash with water may be helpful for those who find it necessary.

A warm saltwater or baking soda rinse may relieve mild irritations of the oral tissue. Rinse 4-6 times a day with one of the following:

- 1 tsp. of salt in 4 cups of water
- 1 tsp. of baking soda in 8 oz. of water
- ½ tsp. salt & 2 tbsp. baking soda in 4 cups water

## **LIP CARE**

Avoid using lip balms that are petroleum-based because they can encourage bacterial growth and keep your lips dry. Use a beeswax, water, or vegetable-based lubricant. If applying lip balm with finger, wash hands thoroughly prior to use.

## **DENTURE CARE**

Dentures have microscopic holes and pores that can harbor bacteria. Clean dentures thoroughly each day. Do not wear dentures to bed. Soak in warm water or a denture cleaner overnight. Do not wear dentures while using mouthwash or during radiation treatment to the head and neck region.

Gently brush the gum tissue and areas under dentures daily or wipe with moist gauze to remove plaque. Remove dentures and rinse after each meal.

It is vital to see your dentist at the first sign of discomfort or if sores develop as adjustments or relining may be necessary.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Cancer treatments increase your risks for tooth decay, periodontal disease and infection. Consult your oncologist if it is safe for you to return to a regular maintenance schedule with your dentist. You should be seen at least 3 times a year for routine exams, oral cancer screenings and professional cleanings. It is important to detect and treat any dental issues as early as possible.

Always report any health changes to your dentist and hygienist. Bring a current list of medications to each appointment and inform your dentist of any bone-building medications used with your cancer treatments. Antibiotics prior to dental treatment may be necessary if you have a surgically implanted port.

**Be proactive. Prevention is the key to avoiding uncomfortable, potentially dangerous and costly oral side effects.**