



CANCER
INFAMILY
— build knowledge



MOUTH, GUMS AND THROAT

This leaflet discusses mouth, gums and throat problems that sometimes develop during chemotherapy. Ask your doctor if you should expect this side effect from your treatment(s).

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLETS ARE NOT MEANT TO REPLACE THE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY YOUR DOCTOR.

Mouth, gums and throat

A good oral hygiene during cancer treatment is crucial. Chemotherapy can lead to mouth and throat sores, dry and irritated mucous membranes, or even bleeding.

Sores are not only painful, making eat difficult, but can also lead to infection,

as our mouth is normally full of germs. Infections can be difficult to fight during cancer treatment, so take every precaution to avoid them.

The good news is that cancer-related sores are temporary.

Keeping your mouth, gums and throat healthy:

- ✘ Go to the dentist at least 2 to 3 weeks before starting chemotherapy to sort all caries, abscesses, inflammation of the gums or poorly adjusted dentures. This should give you enough time to recover from any procedure necessary.
- ✘ Ask your dentist about brushing your teeth and flossing during chemotherapy.
- ✘ Ask for suggestions of a special toothbrush, dental floss and toothpaste, if your gums are very sensitive.
- ✘ Ask about a gel or mouthwash with fluoride to prevent cavities, as chemotherapy can increase their risk.
- ✘ Brush your teeth and gums after every meal. Use an extra-soft toothbrush and brush delicately to avoid injury to the gums.
- ✘ Rinse thoroughly your toothbrush after each use, and store it in a dry place.
- ✘ Gargle your mouth with non-alcoholic mouthwash in the morning, after every meal and at bedtime. Do the same after vomiting.
- ✘ Avoid store-bought disinfectants. They usually contain substances that can irritate you mouth as alcohol or hydrogen peroxide. Ask your doctor or nurse about a mild mouth disinfectant to prevent infections.
- ✘ Use a cream or ointment on the lips to prevent them from drying.



If your mouth/throat sores are painful or interfere with eating:

- ✘ Ask your doctor if there are anything you can apply directly on the wounds to treat them, and to relieve the pain.
- ✘ Eat food that is cold or at room temperature. Very hot food can irritate the mouth and throat.
- ✘ Eat soft food such as ice cream, smoothies, baby purees, cooked fruit, mashed potatoes, boiled vegetables, soft or scrambled eggs, cottage cheese, macaroni and cheese, creams, puddings and gelatin.
- ✘ Avoid irritating or acidic foods - such as tomatoes, citrus fruits/-juice (orange, grapefruit and lemon) - spicy and salty foods, or coarse, rough or dry foods - such as raw vegetables, salty snacks, cereal flakes, and toasted foods.
- ✘ Ask your doctor to refer you to a nutritionist if you are having problems eating.
- ✘ Tell your doctor if you frequently have mouth sores.



If your mouth is constantly dry, causing problems when eating:

- ✗ Ask your doctor if you should use Saliva Substitutes/Artificial Saliva, which are designed to moisten and relieve the discomfort from chronic dry mouth.
- ✗ Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.
- ✗ Suck ice cubes, sugar-free candy or frozen ice cream.
- ✗ Chew sugar-free gum.
- ✗ Moisten all dry food with melted butter/margarine, meat sauce, sauces or broths.
- ✗ Eat soft food or in puree.
- ✗ Use a moisturizing lipstick if your lips feel dry.



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