

Patients Undergoing Cancer Therapy **ORAL ONCOLOGY CLINIC**

This note provides information on oral/dental changes that may be of importance before, during and after your cancer treatment. Although these guidelines are standardized, it is important to remember that your individual needs may differ from this strategy. Having a discussion with your dental team is important to develop a daily routine to suit your individual needs. For any questions on pretreatment care, and care following cancer therapy and to integrate with the oncology plan, please contact the treating oncologist or local expert who is affiliated with cancer center. This is particularly important for dental conditions that may require surgical management and for best preventive strategies.

Oral Care prior to cancer treatment:

- Treat conditions causing pain and swelling and at risk for infection during treatment
- Treat dental conditions that may require dental surgery in the future if to receive head and neck radiation therapy

Oral Self Care during treatment:

- **Importance**
 - Caring for your oral health during therapy is critical as side effects of treatment (listed below) concern more than just your mouth. They may cause pain, affect your nutrition, and in turn your overall well-being
- **Basic Guidelines**
 - Tooth brushing: twice per day with an ultra soft toothbrush
 - Flossing: once per day, gentle to avoid floss cuts
 - Rinsing: see below for an at home mouth rinse recipe that can be used daily and avoid alcohol containing rinses

- Mouth Rinse Recipe: 1 teaspoon (5mL) of salt, 1 teaspoon (5mL) of baking soda, 4 cups (1L) of water. Mix, store in air tight container at room temperature, discard at the end of each day.
- Supplements: Xylitol products, mouth wetting products and fluoride. Ask your dental team
- **Hygiene Recall**
 - Recommended to have teeth cleaned BEFORE cancer therapy
 - Once therapy is completed and cleared to return for dental treatment, patients may be recommended to be some more frequently than prior to cancer treatment

Common oral side-effects surrounding my treatment.

- **Xerostomia Dry Mouth:** *decreased saliva flow*
 - Effects: ropey saliva, sticky sensation, less saliva, dry mouth, chapped lips, etc.
 - Managing Side Effects: Try sipping water, Xylitol products (available as mints, lozenges, gums, and rinses), mouth wetting agents. Avoid alcohol containing mouth rinses, coarse, spicy and acidic foods. Sugar substitutes should be used instead of sugar, as your teeth are more susceptible to decay as long as your mouth is dry. Prescription treatments may be indicated.
- **Mucositis Oral Pain**
 - Effects: ulcerative sores, which can occur in any location in your mouth and throat
 - Managing Side Effects: Use at home mouth rinse recipe to calm oral tissues, Chlorhexidine (available by Rx only), regular brushing and flossing. Avoid the same things as with xerostomia. Review with experienced professional for local methods and pain medications as needed.

- **Fungal Infections Yeast**
 - Effects: White coating or red changes on tongue or oral tissues, cracking and sensitivity at the corners of the mouth; taste change and mouth odor
 - Managing Side effects: Adequate at home oral self care for prevention, which should include brushing tongue, antifungal medication (available by Rx only), daily denture cleaning and avoid overnight use
- **Dysgeusia Taste Alteration**
 - Effects: lack or altered taste sensation
 - Managing side effects: Ensure you are maintaining a balanced diet regardless of taste alteration which could increase or decrease your appetite
 - Review with experienced professional for diet instructions and treatments as needed.
- **Dental cavity prevention:** oral hygiene, treating dry mouth, fluoride, diet, chlorhexidine
- **Dietary recommendations:**
 - Soft diet (atraumatic food), supplements if needed
- **Trismus:** Limited jaw opening:
 - Severely impact food intake, speech, and compromise oral hygiene
 - Managing and preventing by daily exercise therapy