

Mucositis (sore mouth/throat)

An inflammation of the tissues in the mouth and/or throat is called mucositis. This can be caused by chemotherapy and radiation. Mucositis can start five to seven days after chemo and about two weeks after radiation to the head and neck. If it occurs, it will heal with time and care.

Mucositis can put you at risk for infection. Good mouth care can help prevent infection.

Seeing your dentist for a check up before you start treatment is advised.

Signs of mucositis may be:

- discomfort or pain
- redness
- mouth sores
- burning feeling
- trouble swallowing
- sensitivity to alcohol, hot, cold, salty, spicy or acidic foods and drinks
- pain or difficulty wearing your dentures

Call your nurse or doctor if you have:

- a fever 38°C or 100.4°F
- trouble eating or swallowing
- white spots in your mouth or on your tongue
- sores in your mouth and/or on your lips

You will require medication to treat these symptoms.

Mouth Care Tips

- Brush your teeth and tongue with a very soft toothbrush. Use a toothpaste with no peroxide, tartar control or fluoride.
Example: Biotene, Sensodyne
- Avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- Rinse your mouth after eating and before bed. Use one half teaspoon of salt or baking soda to one cup of warm water.
- Do not smoke.
- Do not floss if your blood is low while on chemotherapy.
- If you are having radiation to the head and neck do not floss at all.
- Keep your mouth and lips moist. Sip water often and use lip balm.
- Suck on ice chips, if receiving 5FU (fluorouracil) chemotherapy.

If mucositis occurs:

- Eat soft, moist foods that are at room temperature.
- Avoid acidic foods/drinks such as oranges, tomatoes and fruit juices.
- Avoid crunchy and spicy foods.
- Ask to speak to a dietitian.
- Take pain medication.
- Remove your dentures. They can make your mouth sore. If you can not eat without your dentures, wear them to eat then remove them and rinse your mouth.