

Oral Health Care for Patients with Cancer

Please remember to review all oral health care with your oncologist to ensure team coordination and communication!

Oral Health Care Instructions for Patients Undergoing a Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) or High-Dose Chemotherapy

Goal: Minimize the risk of developing oral mucositis, bleeding, and infection.

Before Bone Marrow Transplant

- Prioritize a dental cleaning before you get admitted. Studies have shown that a cleaning can minimize the severity of mouth sores that may arise.
 - Avoid dental treatment during stem-cell harvesting (if undergoing autologous stem cell transplant)
- Have your cavities filled and hopeless teeth (or teeth that have potential to cause an infection) extracted
 - Ideally dental extractions should be performed at least 1 week before initiation of chemotherapy (white blood cell nadir (lowest point) typically occurs 7-14 days after chemotherapy)

During Bone Marrow Transplant

- Use an ultra-soft toothbrush throughout the course of your BMT
- Avoid flossing your teeth for as long as your counts are low (ie. Platelets <50K) or when your coagulation profile is abnormal
- Use a prescription fluoridated toothpaste at bedtime
- Avoid alcohol containing oral products/rinses
- If you are wearing a removable prosthesis (like a denture), leave it out for as long as possible each day and clean daily

After Bone Marrow Transplant

- Resume flossing when your platelet counts are adequate or your coagulation profile is back to normal
- Resume routine dental care when your lab values are adequate (This roughly takes 6 months post-autologous SCT and 1-year post-allogeneic SCT)

Oral Health Care Instructions for Patients Undergoing Head and Neck Radiation Therapy (HNRT)

Goal: Minimize potential risk for developing osteoradionecrosis of the jaws, oral mucositis and infection.

Before Head and Neck Radiation Therapy

- Prioritize a dental cleaning before you get admitted. Studies have shown that a professional dental cleaning can minimize the severity of mouth sores that may arise during therapy.
- Have your cavities filled and hopeless teeth (or teeth that have potential to cause an infection) extracted
 - Ideally allow 2-3 weeks of healing after dental extractions and before starting HNRT
- If you have metal in your mouth (silver fillings and crowns), get a custom acrylic mouthguard/shield made by your dentist

During Head and Neck Radiation Therapy

- Wear your mouthguard/shield during your simulation appointment and all radiation therapy treatment appointments
- Clean removable dental appliances worn during treatment daily
- Use an ultra-soft bristled toothbrush with a prescription fluoridated toothpaste after every meal
- Reduce sugar consumption
- Avoid alcohol containing oral products/rinses
- Rinse with warm salt and water rinses several times a day if you get mouth sores
- Keep mouth hydrated by using water and lubricating agents such as Biotene to temporarily relieve dryness.
- Consult with a physical therapist
 - Perform jaw muscle exercises 3x/day to minimize jaw muscle stiffness

After Head and Neck Radiation Therapy

- Reduce sugar consumption
- Use a fluoride containing toothpaste
- Follow-up with your dentist for regular check-ups and cleanings (3-4x during the first year or two, and every 6 months thereafter)
- Keep mouth hydrated by using water and lubricating agents such as Biotene to temporarily relieve dryness.
- Avoid elective oral surgery procedures on areas of the jaws that have been exposed to high radiation doses
- Perform jaw muscle exercises daily to help prevent jaw muscle stiffness

Oral Health Care Instructions for Patients Undergoing Antiresorptive Medications

Goal: Minimize potential risk for developing medication-related osteonecrosis of the jaws.

Before initiation of antiresorptive medication

- Allow at least 2-3 weeks for healing after extractions and before initiating anti-resorptive medications

During and after use of antiresorptive medication

- Maintain meticulous oral hygiene (brushing 3 times a day and flossing dailing) to avoid the need for dental extractions post treatment
- Avoid elective oral surgery procedures