

# Mouth Sores Management

Mouth soreness can be caused by mucositis, which is an inflammatory reaction of the mucous membranes that include your lips, mouth, and throat. This can be caused by chemotherapy or radiation therapy. This reaction may progress to painful mouth and gums, dry mouth or infection which can interfere with eating, talking, taste, chewing or swallowing and may last several days.

It is not recommended that you have any dental work done while you are receiving chemotherapy unless your doctor gives you permission.

## To manage or prevent symptoms from occurring, keep mouth clean & moist:

- **Use the following rinse four times a day** to keep your mouth clean:
  - 1 teaspoon salt + 1 tablespoon baking soda + 4 cups water.
  - If your mouth becomes sore, rinse with it every 2-3 hours while awake.
- **Brush your teeth and gums after every meal**, no more than 2-3 times a day. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush and a gentle touch. Rinse your toothbrush well after each use and store it in a dry place. If your mouth is tender you can use mouth swabs, a gauze-covered tongue blade, toothette, or Water-Pik.
- Daily dental flossing is recommended unless your white blood count or platelets are decreased.
- Apply lip moisturizer often. For dry chapped lips try Carmex®, available over the counter.
- Clean dentures and/or bridge after eating, and leave out dentures if experiencing mouth discomfort.
- If your throat is affected, take an antacid as needed to decrease burning sensation.
- For dry mouth:
  - Drink plenty of fluids, 8-10 glasses of a non-caffeinated beverage
  - Suck on ice chips
  - Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless hard candies
  - Try using a saliva substitute solution, available over the counter

## Avoid the following irritants to the mouth:

- DO NOT USE mouthwash containing alcohol such as Scope or Listerine.
- Tobacco, carbonated drinks, coffee, tea, caffeine
- Hot, spicy, salty, coarse or rough textured foods
- Citric juices or foods containing citric acid (tomatoes, oranges, lemon, etc.).
- Alcohol or liquid medication containing alcohol, (such as some cough medicine) if not essential.

## When to report your mouth sores:

- Sores or ulcers in mouth or on lips that interfere with eating, drinking or sleeping. There are prescription mouthwashes available that will help.
- White patches on the tongue or mouth, which may indicate a fungal infection
- Symptoms increasing in severity despite above recommendations.