

# How to Care for Your Mouth During Active Chemotherapy



<b>ACTIVE TREATMENT</b>	<p><i>What is Active Chemotherapy?</i></p> <p>Your chemotherapy schedule is designed for you. Your treatment may occur over many months with pauses in between. Even though you do not come in for your treatment every day, your chemotherapy continues to work on your body. It is important that you follow the instructions given by your Dental Oncology team throughout your entire treatment journey.</p> <p><i>This handout can be used as a reference to help you care for your mouth while on active treatment. Your Dental Oncology team will help you with your mouth care during treatment.</i></p>
<b>EATING AND DRINKING</b>	<p><i>Your Registered Dietitian (RD) will help you with your eating and drinking.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choose high protein, high calorie foods and fluids.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cheese, milk, meat, eggs, beans, Greek yogurt, puddings and ice cream</li></ul></li><li>• Choose soft or blended foods if you are having pain or trouble chewing or swallowing regular foods.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cream soups, stews, casseroles, pasta, scrambled eggs and mashed potatoes</li><li>• Add sauces, gravies, oils or butter to moisten food.</li></ul></li><li>• Avoid acidic foods and fluids like tomatoes, and orange or grapefruit juice.</li><li>• Avoid dry, hard, crusty foods like toast, nuts, chips, and raw fruits and vegetables.</li><li>• Eat many small meals or snacks during the day when eating becomes more difficult.</li><li>• Take nutrition supplements and/or smoothies or milkshakes.</li><li>• Aim to drink 8 cups of non-carbonated fluid daily (alcohol and caffeine free).</li><li>• Take small bites of food and sips of fluid often to keep your swallowing working.</li><li>• Taste change is normal. Ask for tips to help food taste better.</li></ul> <p><i>If you are having trouble eating or keeping your weight the same, tell your healthcare team right away.</i></p>
<b>SWALLOWING</b>	<p><i>Changes to Swallowing During Your Treatment</i></p> <p>At any time during treatment, you <b>may</b> find that swallowing is more difficult due to the treatment side effects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your mouth <b>may</b> feel dry. Carry a bottle of water with you and sip often</li><li>• You <b>may</b> notice taste and smell changes.</li><li>• Talk to your healthcare professional if your mouth or throat may feel like it is on fire when you swallow.</li></ul>
<b>ORAL CARE</b>	<p><i>Your Dental Oncology team will help you with your mouth care during treatment</i></p> <p><i>Flossing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Floss at least once daily if you are able.</li></ul> <p><i>Brushing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use a soft toothbrush with a fluoride toothpaste twice daily to avoid tooth decay<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gently brush after meals and before bed.</li><li>• To clear your mouth, use a clean moist gauze or foam swab soaked in mouth rinse. If you cannot bear toothpaste, use the bland mouth rinse (see Recipe).</li></ul></li><li>• Even if your mouth is sore, you should continue with your oral care. You may rinse with a topical anesthetic rinse as prescribed by your dentist or oncologist.</li></ul> <p><i>Rinsing (See “Mouth Rinse Bland Recipe”)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rinse, swish and spit rinse several times after brushing, flossing and eating. Rinse every 1-2 hours while you are awake.</li><li>• For thick mucus, use mouth rinse more often and sip water.</li></ul> <p><i>Oral Moisturizing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Moisturize nasal passages through the night with a steam vapourizer in your room.</li><li>• Moisturize with mouth rinse and water-based lubricants more often.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid petroleum jelly and glycerin products.</li></ul></li></ul> <p><i>Lip Care</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use water-soluble, wax-based, or oil-based lubricants often. Do not apply petroleum jelly.</li></ul>

*If you are scheduled for dental care, inform your dentist that you are on active cancer treatment. The dentist should contact the Department of Dental Oncology before proceeding.*

**Tell your health care team right away if any of the following occur:**

1. You develop mouth sores.
2. You feel pain when you swallow.
3. Your mouth feels swollen.
4. You feel pain that affects your eating and drinking.

*If you develop a fever of 38.3°C/ 100.9°F or higher at any time, or if you develop a fever of 38.0°C/ 100.4°F or higher for at least one hour, seek medical attention at your local emergency department.*

# Oral Care

## MOUTH RINSE BLAND RECIPE



1 level teaspoon  
(5 mL) of salt



1 level teaspoon  
(5 mL) of baking soda



4 cups (1 L)  
of water

### HOW TO MAKE YOUR MOUTH RINSE

1. Mix 1 teaspoon of baking soda and 1 teaspoon of salt with 4 cups of water.
2. Put the mouthwash in a container with a lid.
3. The mouthwash should be kept at room temperature.
4. Discard at the end of each day and make a new batch.

### HOW TO USE YOUR MOUTH RINSE

- Shake well before using.
- Rinse and gargle with one tablespoon (15 mL) and then spit out.
- Repeat 2 or 3 times at each use.
- Use mouthwash every 2 hours during the day.

### DENTURE CARE

- Keep your dentures out as much as possible.
- Remove dentures, plates and prostheses before brushing.
- Brush and rinse dentures after meals and before bed.
- Soak dentures in cleansing solution for at least 8 hours.
- If you are on antifungal therapy, soak in anti-fungal solution.

### IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT YOUR CARE:

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