

How to Care for Yourself **Before** Head and Neck Radiation Begins



EATING AND DRINKING

Your Registered Dietitian (RD) will help you with your eating and drinking before treatment.

- Eat a balanced diet with foods from all food groups in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.
- Choose soft or blended foods if you are having pain or trouble chewing or swallowing regular foods.
- Aim to drink 8 cups of non carbonated fluid every day (alcohol free).
- Keep your body weight the same.
- If you are underweight, try to gain some weight.

SWALLOWING

Your Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) may help you with your swallowing before treatment.

Swallowing Study and Diet Changes

- Before treatment begins, you may be assessed by a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) to get a better idea of how you are swallowing.
- To keep you swallowing safely during treatment some of your food and liquid may be changed.

Swallowing Exercises

- Start your exercises right away.
- Do each exercise 5 to 10 times, 3 times a day.

Signs of Swallowing Problems

- Coughing, throat-clearing, or a wet or gurgly during meals
- Food feeling stuck in your throat, or a need to wash food down with fluid.
- Needing to make an effort to swallow, or needing more time to eat.
- Trouble chewing food.
- Liquid coming out of your mouth or nose.

Swallowing Safety

- Sit up straight when eating or drinking and remain sitting up for 30 minutes afterwards.
- Use teaspoons and take small sips of liquids.
- Alternate between small bites of food with small sips of liquids.
- Try not to talk while chewing or swallowing.
- Check that your mouth and cheeks are free from food after eating.
- You may be given other swallowing techniques to help you swallow as best you can.

ORAL CARE

Your Dental Oncology team will help you with your mouth care before your treatment begins.

Flossing

- Floss at least once daily with waxed floss.

Brushing

- Use a soft toothbrush.
 - Brush before bed.
 - Gently brush tongue.
 - Brush within 30 minutes of eating.

Rinsing (See "Mouth Rinse Bland Recipe")

- Rinse, swish and spit rinse several times after brushing or flossing.
 - Ensure medicated rinses are done 20 minutes apart.

Oral Moisturizing

- Moisturize nasal passages through the night with a steam vapourizer in your room.
- Moisturize with mouth rinse and water based lubricants often.
 - Avoid petroleum jelly and glycerin products.

Lip Care

- Use water-soluble, wax-based, or oil-based lubricants.
- Apply after cleaning, at bedtime and as needed.
- **Do not** apply petroleum Jelly.

SKIN CARE

Helpful Skin-care Guidelines from Your Radiation Treatment team.

Moisturize your skin

- Wash with mild unscented soap.
- Bath with warm water, rinse well, and pat dry with a clean soft towel.
- Wear loose-fitting and breathable clothing, such as cotton.

Moisturize your skin

- Use water-based body lotions or creams to moisturize the skin as needed.
- **Do not** use aftershave or perfume products on your skin.
- Avoid products that contain petroleum Jelly.

Protect your skin

- Protect your skin from direct sunlight and wind.
- Wear a brimmed hat and protective clothing.
- Avoid extreme hot or cold temperatures.
- **Do not** use ice packs or heating pads, and **do not** soak in a hot tub.
- Use an electric shaver only.

TUBE FEEDING AND CARE

If you have a feeding tube, your Registered Dietitian (RD) and healthcare team will work with you to manage your tube feeding and care.

- Flush your tube with 60mL (1 syringe) of lukewarm tap water 2 times a day (morning and night).
- Clean the skin around your tube daily and keep it dry.
 1. Clean the skin with a cotton swab dipped in water or gentle soap and water.
 2. Wipe away any crusting or drainage.
 3. Gently pat dry with a soft, clean towel or cotton ball.
 4. If there is a leak, cover skin with a gauze bandage.
- Cover tube while showering; no baths, hot tubs or pools.
- **Do not** use rubbing alcohol, peroxide, antibacterial lotions or gels on the skin around your tube.

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.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE OF FLUORIDE TRAYS

1. Brush and floss before wearing trays.
2. Fill the grooves of the trays 1/3 full with gel.
3. Insert tray and spit out any excess gel.
4. Leave the tray in for 5 minutes.
 - Use at bedtime for longer lasting results.
 - Brush trays and air dry after each use.
 - **Do not** use hot water to clean trays (hot water will distort the tray).
 - **Do not** eat, drink or rinse for 30 minutes after tray use.

Inform your Dental team if you are no longer able to use your fluoride trays.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT YOUR CARE:
