

# How to Care for Your Mouth During Active Chemotherapy



## ACTIVE TREATMENT

### *What is Active Chemotherapy?*

Chemotherapy continues to work even though you don't have treatment everyday, it is therefore important to continue to care for your mouth and teeth throughout all of your treatment to reduce the risk of infection and tooth decay. Your Dentist and Oncology team will have provided you with guidance on how to maintain good oral care and dental care.

*This handout can be used as a guide to help you care for your mouth while on active treatment.*

## EATING AND DRINKING

### *Your Registered Dietitian (RD) will work with you to help you with your eating and drinking*

- Choose high protein, high calorie foods and liquids
  - Cheese, milk, meat, eggs, beans, Greek yogurt, puddings and ice cream
- Choose soft or blended foods if you are having pain or trouble chewing or swallowing regular foods
  - Cream soups, stews, casseroles, pasta, scrambled eggs and mashed potatoes
  - Add sauces, gravies, oils or butter to moisten food
- Avoid acidic foods and fluids like tomatoes, and orange or grapefruit juice
- Avoid dry, hard, crusty foods like toast, nuts, chips, and raw fruits and vegetables
- Eat many small meals or snacks during the day when eating becomes more difficult
- Take nutritional supplements and/or smoothies or milkshakes
- Aim to drink 8 cups of water daily (avoid alcohol and caffeine)
- Take small bites of food and sips of liquid often to keep your swallowing working
- Taste change is normal. Ask for tips to help food taste better

*If you are having trouble eating or keeping your weight the same, tell your healthcare team right away*

## SWALLOWING

### *Changes to Swallowing During Your Treatment*

Let your SLT or Oncology team know at any time during treatment if you find your swallowing is more difficult due to the treatment side effects.

- Your mouth may feel dry. Carry a bottle of water with you and sip often
- You may notice change in your sense of taste and smell
- Talk to your healthcare professional if your mouth/throat feels like it is on fire when you swallow

## ORAL CARE

### *Your Dental Oncology team will help you with your mouth care during treatment*

#### *Flossing*

- Floss at least once daily if you are able

#### *Brushing*

- Use a soft toothbrush with a fluoride toothpaste twice daily to avoid tooth decay
  - Soften bristles with hot water
  - Gently brush after meals and before bed
  - To clear your mouth, use a clean moist gauze or foam swab soaked in mouth rinse
  - If you cannot bear toothpaste, use soothing mouth rinse
  - Even if your mouth is sore it is encouraged that you continue with your oral care
  - You may rinse with Xylocaine as prescribed by your dentist or oncologist

#### *Rinsing (see "Mouth Rinse Recipe" on back)*

- Rinse, swish and spit rinse several times after brushing, flossing and eating
  - Rinse every 1-2 hours while you are awake
- For thick mucus, use mouth rinse more often and sip water

#### *Oral Moisturizing*

- Moisturising nasal passages using steaming or a nebuliser if you have been given one as part of your care
- Moisturize with mouth rinse and water based lubricants more often
  - Avoid vaseline jelly and glycerin products

#### *Lip Care*

- Use water soluble, wax based, or oil based lubricants often
  - *Do not apply vaseline jelly*

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

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

- You develop mouth sores
- You feel pain when you swallow
- Your mouth feels swollen
- You feel pain that affects your eating and drinking

# 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 level teaspoon (5 ml) of salt
- Put the mouthwash in a container with a lid
- The mouthwash should be kept at room temperature
- Discard any remaining mouth rinse 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 if they are causing pain
- Remove dentures, plates and prostheses before brushing
- Gently brush and rinse dentures after meals and before bed. Avoid vigorous scrubbing
- Soak dentures in cleansing solution for at least 8 hours
- If you are on antifungal therapy, soak your denture in anti-fungal solution

### IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT YOUR CARE:

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