
Hints to Help with Mouth Ulcers

One of our most important goals at Moffitt Cancer Center is to provide you with quality patient care through education, research and service. The following information has been developed to help you become aware of **mouth ulcers** and what you can do to prevent and/or manage them. Your nurse or dietitian will review this pamphlet with you and will answer any questions you may have.

It is a good idea to visit your dentist for a regular checkup before you start chemotherapy. This will make sure you start with a healthy mouth. Also, replace your toothbrush regularly, especially after an infection. Let the toothbrush dry completely before packing it away.

Hints to help with mouth ulcers:

1. Keep your mouth very clean and examine it every day.
 - Open your mouth as far as you can and look at your tongue, your gums, the lining of your mouth and the back of your throat.
 - Look for redness, swelling, sores, bleeding and color changes (for example, white, gray, brown).
 - Brush your teeth and rinse your mouth at least 4 times each day with saline or mouthwash, especially after meals and at bedtime.
 - Rinse your mouth (swish and spit) with the saline (salt water) until it is all used. You can make this rinse by mixing ¼ teaspoon salt in one cup of water or a mixture of one (1) cup salt water and ¼ teaspoon baking soda.
 - Gently brush your teeth. If the brush causes pain or bleeding, use 3-4 green toothettes instead.
 - If you use a commercial mouthwash, avoid those that contain alcohol. They can be very drying and can irritate the lining of your mouth.
 - Use a **non-abrasive fluoride** toothpaste or mouth rinse. Place a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste on your soft-bristle toothbrush.
 - Rinse your toothbrush with running water or mouthwash for 30 seconds, dry with a paper towel and stand it upright until next use.
 - Ask for a new toothbrush 48 hours after chemotherapy is completed and then every 7 days while you are in the hospital.
 - Stay away from products that have “whiteners” in them.
 - If you have dentures, brush your dentures with a soft toothbrush or sponge tipped swab (toothette) after each meal and at bedtime. Take out your dentures often to help keep your mouth clean. If you get mouth sores, stop wearing your dentures until the sores go away.

2. Do not eat foods that irritate your mouth. This includes foods that are very spicy or very hot.
 - Acidic food, such as citrus fruits and tomatoes, should also be avoided
 - Hard, sharp or coarse foods (crusty breads, chips, crackers) can injure your mouth
 - Try to avoid alcohol and carbonated drinks (such as soda)
 - Do not smoke cigarettes, cigars or pipes. Do not use smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco, snuff)

