

## Side Effects - **Mouth, throat and teeth problems**

Cancer treatments may cause mouth, throat and teeth problems. Some problems go away after treatment. Others last a long time or never go away. Some develop months or years after treatment.

### **Mouth and throat problems may include:**

- Changes in taste (dysgeusia) or smell
- Dry mouth (xerostomia)
- Swallowing problems (dysphagia)
- Cavities and other kinds of tooth problems
- Loss of or change in sense of taste
- Sensitivity to hot or cold foods
- Jaw stiffness or jawbone changes
- Redness and sores in the mouth (stomatitis)  
(Risk for developing stomatitis increases five to 10 days after each treatment cycle starts.)
- Redness and sores in the throat (pharyngitis)
- Redness and sores in the esophagus (esophagitis)
- Pain or swelling in the mouth (oral mucositis)
- Redness or irritation of the membrane which lines the digestive tract from the mouth to the rectum (mucositis)



### **Mouth problems are more serious if they interfere with eating and drinking because of dehydration/malnutrition. Call your doctor or nurse if you have:**

- Pain in your mouth, lips or throat that makes it difficult to eat, drink or sleep
- A fever of 100.4° F or higher
- Red, shininess in your mouth that lasts for more than two days
- Bleeding from the gums or mouth
- White patches inside your mouth, on your tongue or in your throat

### **Ways to prevent or manage these problems:**

- **Get a dental check-up before starting treatment.** Tell the dentist about your cancer treatment.
- Keep your mouth clean. Brush your teeth, gums and tongue gently for at least 90 seconds with an extra-soft toothbrush after meals and at bedtime. Soften the bristles in warm water. Ask your dentist for tooth sponges, such as Toothettes® or Dentips®, that you can use in place of a toothbrush. Use a mild fluoride toothpaste (like children's toothpaste) and a mouthwash without alcohol. If your platelets are greater than 50,000, floss your teeth gently. If your gums bleed or hurt, stay away from the areas that are bleeding or sore, but keep flossing your other teeth. If you have dentures, clean, brush and rinse them after meals and remove them at night. Have your dentist check them to make sure they fit well.
- **Check your mouth for sores and white spots daily.** Tell your doctor or nurse as soon as you notice any changes, such as pain or sensitivity.



