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:

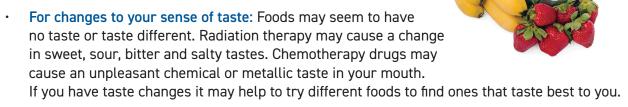
- Get a dental check-up before starting treatment. Tell the dentist about your cancer treatment.
- Keep your mouth clean. Brush your teeth, gums and tongue gently for at least 90 seconds with an extra-soft toothbrush after meals and at bedtime. Soften the bristles in warm water. Ask your dentist for 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.





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- For a dry mouth: A dry mouth can increase the risk of tooth decay and mouth infections. Drink plenty of liquids. Keep water handy and sip it often. Suck on ice chips or sugar-free hard candy, have frozen desserts or chew sugar-free gum. Use lip balm. Ask about medicines such as saliva substitutes that can coat, protect and moisten your mouth and throat. Acupuncture may help with dry mouth.
- For a sore mouth or throat: Rinse your mouth several times a day with a solution of 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon baking soda in one cup of warm water. Follow with a plain water rinse. Choose foods that are soft, wet and easy to swallow. Use a blender to make milkshakes or blend your food to make it easier to swallow. Ask about pain medicine, such as lozenges or sprays that numb your mouth and make eating less painful. Avoid tobacco, alcohol and foods or drinks that can irritate your mouth, foods that are crunchy, salty, spicy or sugary; and alcoholic drinks.



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Get a dental check-up after treatment ends. Ask how often you should have checkups and ways to take care of your mouth and teeth.

Questions I may have: