

# Managing Mouth Sores During Cancer Treatment

## What is Radiation and Chemotherapy induced mucositis (mouth sores)?

Patients receiving radiation to the head and neck and/or chemotherapy are commonly impacted by some degree of oral mucositis. Mucositis is inflammation of the oral tissue which may result in redness, ulcerations, pain difficulty eating, and/or difficulty drinking and may increase the risk for infections. **It is important to talk with your doctor and obtain support early if you are having any concerns in your mouth.**

## Management of mouth sores:

Many home remedies, over-the-counter, and prescription options are available that may help reduce symptoms related to mouth sores. Try the following home remedies to reduce mouth sores and pain

- Keep your mouth moist by drinking water throughout the day.
- Rinse with  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp salt and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp baking soda in 8 oz of water and rinse throughout the day. If the salt irritates your mouth, omit the salt and use  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp baking soda in 8 oz water. These solutions may aid in moistening of tissue and prevention of infection.
- Suck on ice chips or popsicles

Consider over-the-counter options which include:

- Dry mouth products - Available in most grocery stores, pharmacies, or online.
- Aloe vera mouthwash - Follow package instructions.
- Coconut oil- Coat mouth with oil and spit out excess several times per day.
- Systemic pain-relieving medicines. Talk with your doctor about taking anti-inflammatory and pain control medications such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen.

Prescription medications:

- If your symptoms are not controlled by home remedies or over-the-counter therapies talk to your doctor about options for prescription medications such as a magic mouthrinse, topical anesthetic mouthrinse, and/or additional systemic pain-relieving medications. Please use as directed.

Additional pain-reducing strategies you may find helpful include:

- Exercise
- Acupuncture
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Distraction,
- Relaxation and guided imagery
- Psychotherapy
- Hypnosis
- support groups
- Individual counseling

Please alert your dentist and oncology team of any questions or concerns so that your team may best support you throughout your treatment.

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