

Mucositis (mouth soreness)

Mucositis is a common side effect of chemotherapy and of radiation therapy at the head and neck. These treatments can damage delicate cells, such as those lining the mouth, as well as the cancer they target.

Pain is a common complication of mucositis. Avoid products that contain aspirin or anti-inflammatory agents that could increase the risk of bleeding. Topical products like Orajel or Gelclair may provide comfort.

You may experience swelling and soreness

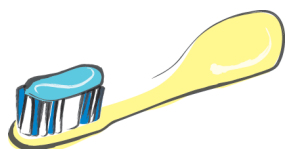
in your mouth. The discomfort may be mild or severe. Symptoms often appear about seven days after treatment begins.

Symptoms can include:

- ulcers or sores on the mouth, gums, or tongue
- a burning sensation in the mouth
- loss of taste or sensitivity to hot or cold foods
- dry mouth

Managing Symptoms

These tips can help you improve your chances of avoiding problems related to mucositis.



Oral Care

Brush your teeth after every meal with a soft-bristled toothbrush and non-irritating toothpaste. Avoid mouthwashes and toothpaste with strong whiteners. Floss gently daily. If you wear dentures, clean them several times per day.



Eat Soothing Foods

Choose foods that are soothing. Soft and moist foods like ice cream or yogurt may be less irritating and easier to eat than hot, spicy foods. Popsicles and ice cubes may provide comfort and extra moisture.



Stay Hydrated

Drink plenty of water. Acidic drinks like orange juice may cause pain if you have mouth sores. Use lip balm. Ice chips and sugarless candy or gum can help relieve dry mouth.

Take Charge of Your Symptoms

Tell your cancer care team if you experience any of the following: pain, infection, excessive bleeding, fever, nausea, or vomiting. Keep a journal of pain and symptoms to share with your care team.