

# How to Deal with Mouth Sores

## Mouth Sores

It is common for patients being treated with chemotherapy or radiation to have problems in their mouth or throat. These areas may become dry or develop sores as a result of treatment. And since the lining of your mouth provides the first line of defense against infection, these sores can lead to a more serious infection if not treated.

## Signs of Mouth Sores

- pain or burning
- taste changes
- sore throat
- difficulty swallowing
- mild redness and swelling along the gumline
- white patches in your mouth

## When to Call Your Nurse

You should call your nurse if you have:

- ulcers or white patches
- difficulty eating or drinking due to pain
- a fever.

## How to Help Prevent Mouth Sores

- Use a soft bristle toothbrush.
- Wear dentures only when needed. You may need to keep your dentures out if they do not fit right, to avoid irritation.
- Drink lots of liquids.
- Keep your lips and mouth moist.
- Avoid commercial mouthwashes.
- Rinse your mouth after every meal and at bedtime with a non-irritating mouth wash:
  - Mix 1 teaspoon baking soda with 1 cup warm water.
  - Do not add hydrogen peroxide to mouth rinses.
- Clean your dentures every day and soak them every night in fresh solution.

## How to Manage Mouth Sores

- Keep your mouth and gums clean to help prevent infections — see “How To Help Prevent Mouth Sores.”
- Avoid foods and juices that are highly acidic.
- Avoid hot, spicy or sugary foods.
- Cold, soft, bland foods, such as ice cream, yogurt, or Popsicles are more soothing and usually better tolerated.
- Use a straw to make drinking easier.
- Avoid cigarettes and alcohol.

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- Avoid using floss and toothpicks if your blood counts are low.
- If dry mouth is a problem:
  - sip water often
  - suck on ice chips
  - chew sugarless gum or suck on hard candy
  - use artificial saliva (over-the-counter product).
- Use prescription oral anesthetics as directed.
- Use pain medicines as directed.

Because eating well and drinking liquids play a vital role in your body's healing process, it is important to take good care of your mouth and throat. Call your doctor or nurse if you begin to have problems.

Please ask your nurse if you have any more questions about mouth care or mouth sores.