



Montana Cancer Center

Mouth Sores

Chemotherapy destroys cancer cells but also effects normal cells, including those that line your mouth. This may cause temporary dryness, redness, swelling, sores, and pain in you mouth. This side effect is called "stomatitis" and is not permanent.

Chemotherapy may also increase your risk for developing an infection. Good oral care will decrease your risk of stomatitis and infection. It will also keep your mouth clean, moist, and more comfortable. As your blood counts return to normal, your mouth will also begin to heal.

Suggestions to help you reduce the risk of stomatitis and mouth infections:

- Brush your teeth carefully with a soft toothbrush after each meal and at bedtime. Use dental floss cautiously and do not use it if your gums become very sore.
- Rinse your mouth with saline after each meal and at bedtime. At home, you may make your own saline by mixing 1tsp. salt and 1 pint water (discard the solution after 24 hours.)
- Avoid the use of:
 - Commercial mouthwashes
 - Smoking and chewing tobacco
 - Hot temperature and spicy foods
 - Alcohol
- Apply moisturizer to lips to prevent dryness.
- If you wear dentures, remove and clean them every day and leave them out at least 8 hours to rest your gums. If dentures are ill fitting, use them only during meal times.
- Eat a balanced, nutritious diet and drink plenty of fluids (six-10 oz. glasses a day.)

Notify your physician:

- If you notice white patches on the tongue, back of throat, or gums.
- If you have a temperature greater than 101°F or chills.
- If mouth pain is preventing you from eating or drinking.