



Dental or Teeth Concerns?

Problems with the teeth or mouth are common in cancer patients. Preventive dental care before cancer treatment begins is very important. To manage oral complications, your care team will work closely with your dentist and may refer you to other health professionals with special training.

Treating new problems as soon as they appear may make oral complications less severe. Sometimes treatment doses need to be decreased or treatment stopped because of oral complications. When there are fewer complications, cancer treatment may work better and you may have a better quality of life.

Dental Information

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/teeth>

The goals of oral and dental care are different before, during, and after cancer treatment:

- Before cancer treatment, the goal is to prepare for cancer treatment by treating existing oral problems. [American Dental Association, Before](#)
- During cancer treatment, the goals are to prevent oral complications and manage problems that occur. [American Dental Association, During](#)
- After cancer treatment, the goals are to keep teeth and gums healthy and manage any long-term side effects of cancer and its treatment. [American Dental Association, After](#)

General Information About Oral Complications

- Are common in cancer patients, especially with head and neck cancer
- Can make recovery harder
- May be side effects of the disease, treatment, or other causes
- Preventing and controlling oral complications can help you continue treatment and enjoy better quality of life.

Cancer patients have a high risk of oral complications because:

- Chemotherapy and radiation therapy slow or stop the growth of new cells. Normal cells in the lining of the mouth also grow quickly, so anticancer treatment can stop them from growing, too. This slows down the ability of oral tissue to repair itself by making new cells.
- Radiation therapy may damage oral tissue, salivary glands, and bone.
- Chemo and radiation therapy upset the healthy balance of mouth bacteria.
- Chemotherapy and radiation therapy may cause changes in the lining of the mouth and the salivary glands, which make saliva. This can upset the healthy balance of bacteria.
- These changes may lead to mouth sores, infections, and tooth decay.
- Patients with dentures may develop problems with the dentures being ill-fitting if they lose weight or painful if they have mouth sores. They may need to discuss the fit and use of dentures with their dentist.

Helpful Hints

- See a dentist about 1 month before beginning cancer treatment to make sure your mouth is healthy.
- Give your dentist your cancer doctor's contact information. It's important they talk about your cancer treatment.
- Take good care of your mouth during and after treatment. Follow instructions how to keep your mouth clean.
- Ask your doctor if flossing should be a part of your oral care during treatment especially during chemotherapy.
- Keep your mouth moist by drinking lots of water, sucking ice chips, and using sugar free gum or candy. Artificial saliva, available over the counter, may also be necessary.
- Avoid foods and drinks that could irritate your mouth such as sharp, crunchy foods or hot, spicy foods.
- Avoid tobacco products and alcoholic beverages.
- Call your healthcare provider if your mouth hurts.
- Talk to your dentist about using fluoride gel to help prevent tooth decay.
- Exercise the jaw muscles three times a day: open and close the mouth as far as possible (without causing pain) 20 times. This helps prevent jaw stiffness.
- *If you receive radiation to the head and neck area, make sure you discuss additional instructions for mouth care with your treatment team.*

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- [ASCO answers, Dental and Oral Health](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Dental and Oral Health](#)
- [NIH, NCI Oral Complications of Chemotherapy and Head/Neck Radiation\(PDQ®\)](#)
- [U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, Head and Neck Radiation Treatment & Mouth](#)
- [U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, Chemotherapy and Your Mouth](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Dental Health](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Veterans Living With Cancer](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Complicaciones orales de la quimioterapia y la radioterapia a la cabeza y el cuello \(PDQ®\)](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Salud dental y bucal](#)



- [UIC, College of Dentistry, Comprehensive Care from students with faculty supervision.](#)
Phone: 312-996-7555 1265, appt line open 9:30am – 11:30am
801 S. Paulina St, Chicago, IL 60612
Our student dentists provide care under faculty supervision at a discounted price in exchange for an extra investment of your time to support education. Services range from routine dental procedures, such as exams and fillings, to more complex procedures, such as root canals and restorations.
- [Cook County Dental Clinic/John H. Stroger Hospital](#)
Phone: 312-864-6610
Appt line opens at 8am, 35 appts/day, closes when appts are full, usually by 8:15am
1835 W. Harrison St., First Floor, Chicago, IL 60612
Clinic for next day extractions. In 2019, will have a new clinic for other dental care.
- [PrimeCare, Community Health, West Town Health Center](#)
Phone: 773-269-5540
1431 N. Western Ave., Ste. 406, Chicago, IL 60622
Offers dental care with payment based on income.
Has typically a 4-6 week lead time for initial appointment.
- [Beloved Community Family Wellness Center](#)
Phone: 773-651-3629
6821 S. Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60621
Sliding scale based on income. Can get same day appointments.
- [Lawndale Christian Health Center](#)
Phone 872-588-3000
3860 W. Ogden Ave, Chicago, IL 60623
Sliding scale based on income
- [Aunt Martha’s Southeast Side Community Health Center](#)
Phone: 877-692-8686
3528 East 118th St, Chicago IL 60617
Sliding scale based on income. 1-3 week wait for appointments.
- [TCA Health](#)
Phone 773-995-6300
1029 E. 130th Street, Chicago, IL 60628
8425 Cottage Grove, Chicago Il 60619
Sliding scale based on income, 1-3 week wait for appointments
- [Aspen Dental, MouthMobile, Tour dates and cities served vary](#)
- [VA Benefits.gov, Dental Care](#)
- [Eligibility for Veteran Dental Benefits](#)
- [FreeDentalCare.us](#)

General Notes:

1. Patients need to bring to their first appointment:
 - An ID such as a driver’s license or State ID
and
 - Proof of current income, pay check or social security pay stub, tax return, etc.
1. Wait times can vary based on time of year