

Cancer & Dental Health

(as per the American Dental Association Recommendations)

Cancer and its treatments, like chemotherapy, can weaken your immune system. If your mouth is not as healthy as possible prior to your cancer treatment, you may be more susceptible to infection. If the infection is serious it can delay your cancer treatment.

Before Treatment

- Visit Your Dentist- Treat any areas of concern to reduce possible dental side effects associated with chemotherapy and radiation. Some treatment options may include fluoride treatments to prevent **cavities**, filling existing cavities, treating **gum disease**, **removing infected teeth** or restoring **crowns** or **bridge work** to ensure you will be able to chew your food.
- Not getting a evaluation done can lead to small cavities becoming much larger, and easily treated infections to cause serious issues like cellulitis and septicemia once you begin chemotherapy.
- Floss- Once a day to remove plaque between your teeth. Be gentle as your gums may be sore.
- Rinse your mouth often- **Avoid rinses with alcohol**. Rinses are also helpful after vomiting to keep the acids from damaging your enamel.
- Don't Use Tobacco!

During Treatment:

- Radiation and chemotherapy drugs may cause extreme **dry mouth, ulcers, Candida** and loss of taste.
- Talk to your dentist about including rinses made specifically for dry mouth into your hygiene regimen. **Sugar-free lozenges** may alleviate the burning sensations.
- Your oral hygiene is crucial at this time- so consider incorporating an **electric toothbrush**, and a toothpaste with fluoride in your regimen as well.
- Rinse with **Chlorhexidine Gluconate**, an antibiotic mouthwash, your dentist can prescribe for you. As the immune system is weak, it is important to keep the bacterial count low.

After Treatment:

- Always be sure to **inform your dentist** of any/all treatment you have received so they can plan your dental care accordingly.
- Prioritize your oral health, make sure you get **3-4 month periodic check ups** as your mouth will likely be dry and very acidic (pH level). Regular checks up will keep cavities small, and infections at bay.