

Oral hygiene modifications for patients undergoing cancer treatment

Clean the teeth and mouth every four hours (or after each meal) and at bedtime, following these basic oral hygiene procedures:

1. Brush teeth after every meal and at bedtime with an extra-gentle toothbrush.
2. Soften the bristles in warm water prior to use.
3. Use interdental cleaners to help clean between teeth.
4. Use prescription-strength fluoride toothpaste to prevent cavities.
5. Floss teeth daily, curving around each tooth **and** cleaning gently under the gums.
6. When blood count is low, do not floss; use an interdental brush dipped in an alcohol free chlorhexidine mouthwash.
7. Gentle use of oral irrigators at lowest setting is effective.
8. Rinse mouth several times daily with a solution of baking soda and salt in one cup of warm water, followed with a rinse of plain water. It is especially important to use this rinse after vomiting.
9. Before bed, rinse with an alcohol-free mouthwash to reduce the number of bacteria in the mouth and the possibility of inflammation.
10. At bedtime, use the custom fluoride trays with a neutral sodium fluoride gel.
11. Have teeth cleaned professionally every eight weeks during cancer treatment, as blood counts allow; always check with the oncologist prior to dental appointments.
12. Chew xylitol gum to help prevent cavities.
13. Keep mouth moist by sipping water throughout the day and/or by sucking on ice chips.
14. Use oral moisturizing gels and mouthrinses.
15. Use an oral moisturizing spray for long-term relief; this spray is especially beneficial at night.