

Whilst you are unwell, you are more likely to suffer from problems with your mouth. These problems are often overlooked but can cause pain and discomfort and can interfere with your appetite, taste, chewing, swallowing, speech and sleeping. This pamphlet is designed to advise you on things you can do to prevent these problems and what you can do to help if they occur.

## Care of your mouth

It is recommended that you brush your teeth twice daily with a soft toothbrush and fluoride containing toothpaste.

Foam sticks are an alternative if gentle brushing with a soft toothbrush causes pain or bleeding. After this you should rinse with water or a mouthwash. It is also important to rinse after meals and last thing at night.



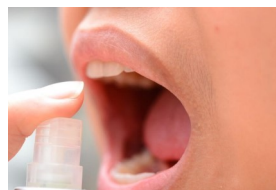
You can make a fresh sodium chloride solution for each rinse by dissolving 1 teaspoon of salt with 500mls of warm or cool water, whatever you prefer. Chlorhexidine mouthwash may sting, especially if your mouth is sore and can interact with other medicines (for example those used with thrush).

Check with a member of the palliative care team if unsure.

If you wear dentures, remove them at night. Clean dentures with a soft toothbrush and non abrasive denture cleaner. Soak overnight in a denture cleaning solution.

## Dry mouth

A dry mouth and a feeling of having no saliva is a common problem. Take frequent sips or sprays of cold water. Other options include chewing gum, semi frozen fruit juice or pieces, ice chips, ice blocks, sweets or mints.



Cutting down on coffee may help. If the above measures are not adequate, artificial saliva or medicine to stimulate the salivary glands can sometimes be used. Ask a member of our palliative care team.

## Mouth Pain

There are many different causes of mouth pain. Sometimes the pain is localised to one area, sometimes it is more generalised inside the mouth. Treatment depends on the cause and may include:

- Treating the underlying cause (if possible)
- Locally applied painkilling gels and mouthwashes.

Dietary changes to reduce the risk of irritation can include:

- Soft, moist, bland foods
- Use of sauces and gravies
- Moistening foods with yoghurt or milk
- Blending or pureeing foods and nutritional supplements
- High calorie drinks/smoothies

## Oral Thrush (Oral Candida)

Thrush is an infection caused by a yeast germ called candida. Small numbers of candida commonly live in a healthy mouth and are usually harmless. However, certain situations such as a dry mouth or general poor health may cause an overgrowth of candida which can lead to oral thrush.

The classical symptom is for white spots to develop in the mouth, although there may be no white spots but areas within the mouth may become red and sore. Most cases are treated with nilstat, an anti-thrush medicine and in some cases anti-thrush tablets such as fluconazole are used.

## Taste Disturbances

You may find that your taste has been altered by chemotherapy, radiotherapy or medications you are taking.

You may find it helpful to flavour foods with herbs, spices, sugar, lemon or sauces or try foods with strong flavours such as bacon or barbequed chicken. Alternatively try bland foods such as eggs, cheese, toast, cream soups and rice.

## Getting in Touch

If you need any further information or have  
any questions please contact

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*Good mouth care is important  
as it maintains self-esteem,  
comfort, and our ability to  
communicate, socialise and  
enjoy food and drinks  
with others*



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## Mouth Care Matters

