

Patient and carer information

Keeping your mouth healthy



Marie Curie Hospice



Marie Curie
Cancer Care



When you are unwell, your mouth may be particularly susceptible to problems such as dryness, ulcers, infection, pain and general discomfort. Some medications and treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy also increase your risk of developing mouth problems, so it is important to take good care of your mouth.

How to keep your mouth healthy

Good mouth hygiene will help to keep your mouth and teeth free from a build up of harmful bacteria and help prevent mouth problems.

The following tips may help you to do this:

- Brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes using a small, soft-headed toothbrush (a baby or child toothbrush is ideal) and fluoride toothpaste. Rinse your mouth thoroughly afterwards with fresh water.
- Take any dentures or dental plates out of your mouth and clean them at least once a day (preferably each evening), using a large toothbrush or denture brush.
 - > Do not clean dentures with toothpaste, as it is too abrasive. Soap and water is ideal, although you can use commercial products if you prefer.
 - > If you wear dentures or dental plates, rinse your mouth three or four times a day to remove any trapped debris.
 - > Soak your dentures or dental plates overnight in water or a commercial product such as Steradent®.

- Drink regularly to help keep your mouth moist and clean.
- Chew sugar-free gum to increase your production of saliva and keep your mouth moist.
- Use mouthwashes as recommended by a doctor, dentist or nurse.
- Cut down or avoid substances that can dry the mouth, for example alcohol, caffeine and smoking.
- If it is difficult to eat because your mouth is dry, sore or painful, try eating a soft diet and avoid spicy and acidic foods.
- Change your toothbrush every three months, or if you develop any infections or ulcers.
- See your dentist regularly to identify and prevent dental problems.

Report any signs of redness, swelling, sores, white patches or bleeding to your nurse or doctor. They will assess your mouth and, if needed, prescribe special medicated toothpaste, mouth rinses and gels.

How can nurses help with your mouth care?

Where possible, carry out your own mouth care. Your nurse can provide advice and support. Ask your nurse or family to assist only if you are having problems.

If you are having mouth problems or if you are at high risk of developing them, ask your nurse to check your mouth for you on a regular basis. This will help to identify any problems promptly and allow us to plan your care with you.

For links to websites about cancer care, information and support, visit our website:
www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers

Support us

The services Marie Curie Cancer Care provides are always free to patients and families but we can only continue to do this through the generosity of our supporters. There are many ways to make a difference:

- make a donation
- leave a legacy in your will
- take part in a fundraising event
- volunteer your time for a wide range of activities
- sponsor a Light to Remember
- become a corporate partner

To find out more, phone: **0800 716 146**, visit our website: www.mariecurie.org.uk or **talk to the hospice fundraiser.**

Your local Marie Curie Hospice actively promotes quality of life for people with cancer and other illnesses and provides support for their families, completely free.

www.mariecurie.org.uk



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