

Your Mouth Care After Oncology Treatment

Congratulations on completing your oncology treatment! As you move forward, taking care of your oral health is a key part of your recovery, especially after oncology treatment. Here are some helpful tips to keep your mouth in the best condition:

1. Have a Good Homecare Routine

- ✓ **Brushing**
 - **Brush Twice Daily:** Brush your teeth every morning and night.
 - **Use a Soft Toothbrush:** A soft bristle toothbrush is gentle on your gums and teeth.
 - **High Fluoride Toothpaste:** Use a high fluoride toothpaste like Colgate NeutraFlour 5000 for added protection.
- ✓ **Cleaning Between Teeth**
 - **Daily Cleaning:** Make sure to clean between your teeth every day.
 - **Floss or Interdental Brushes:** Use floss or interdental brushes to remove food particles and plaque between your teeth.
- ✓ **Denture Care**
 - **Remove and Clean:** Take out your denture(s) every night and brush them thoroughly. Denture cleaning tablets can help keep them fresh.

2. Managing Dry Mouth

Dry mouth is a common issue after treatment. Here's how to manage it effectively:

- ✓ **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- ✓ **Use Salt and Baking Soda Mouth Rinses:** These rinses can help remove thick, sticky saliva and lower mouth acidity. **Rinse for 30 seconds after each meal** and continue this routine consistently until your next appointment with the Dental Team.
- ✓ **Saliva Substitutes:** Consider using products like Oral 7 to help manage dry mouth.
- ✓ **Chew Sugar-Free Gum:** This can stimulate saliva flow and help with dryness.

3. Dietary Advice

- ✓ **Eat a Balanced Diet:** Choose foods that are soft and easy to chew, and avoid very hot, spicy, sticky or crunchy foods that may irritate your mouth's lining.
- ✓ **Limit Sugary and Acidic Foods:** Reduce consumption of sugary and acidic foods and drinks to lower the risk of cavities/decay.
- ✓ **Snack Wisely:** If you snack frequently, rinse your mouth with **salt and baking soda mouth rinses** afterwards to help clean away food particles and reduce acidity.
- ✓ **Minimize Caffeine and Alcohol:** Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol, and opt for alcohol-free mouthwash if needed.

Long Term Oral Health Care

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer you long term, ongoing regular dental care in the public sector. Once your oral health is stable, we will discharge you to the care of your community dentist. If you do not currently have a regular dentist in the community, we encourage you to start looking for one soon.

It is important that you keep up with good oral hygiene and visit your dentist regularly every 6 to 12 months to prevent your teeth from breaking down. Be sure to inform your dentist that you have completed a course of radiotherapy in the head and neck region. If your dentist has concerns regarding your dental management, please ask them to contact us at spcare@adhb.govt.nz for any advice as necessary.

Congratulations again on completing your head and neck cancer treatment. We wish you continued good health and happiness on your journey forward. If you have any questions or need further assistance, don't hesitate to reach out.