

## **Oral hygiene instructions for patients undergoing cancer treatment**

- Clean the teeth and the mouth every four hours (or after each meal) and at bedtime, following these basic oral hygiene procedures:
- Brush teeth after every meal and at bedtime with extra-gentle toothbrush
- Soften bristles in warm water prior to use
- When blood count is low, use an ultrasoft chemobrush ( Ultral Suave 800.553.1440), dipping the brush in an alcohol-free chlorhexidine mouthwash instead of toothpaste
- Use interdental cleaners to help clean between the teeth
- Use prescription-strength fluoride toothpaste to prevent cavities, floss teeth daily, curving around each tooth and cleaning gently under the gums
- When blood count is low, do not floss; use an interdental brush dipping in an alcohol-free chlorhexidine mouthwash
- Gentle use of oral irrigators at lowest setting is effective
- Rinse mouth several times daily with a solution of 0.25 tsp. baking soda, 0.25 tsp. salt in one cup of warm water, following with a rinse of plain water. It is especially important to use this rinse after vomiting
- Before bed, rinse with alcohol-free mouthwash (chlorhexidine) to reduce the number of bacteria in the mouth and the possibility of inflammation
- At bedtime, use the custom fluoride trays with neutral sodium fluoride. Place a ribbon of the fluoride in the tray; insert the upper and the lower trays; bite gently several times to “pump” the gel between the teeth; leave the trays in place for 5-10 min.; remove the trays and expectorate the gel but do not rinse; rinse the trays and allow to air dry; do not brush or eat for at least 30 minutes after treatment
- Have teeth cleaned professionally every eight weeks during cancer treatment, as blood counts allow; always check with the oncologist prior to dental treatment
- Chew xylitol gum to help prevent cavities
- Keep mouth moist by sipping water throughout the day and/or by sucking on ice chips
- Use oral moisturizing gels and mouth rinses such as biotene
- Use an oral moisturizing spray for long-term relief (biotene) ; this spray is especially beneficial at night
- Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine and follow a diet consisting of soft, bland, non-irritating foods and beverages; in addition, avoid hot, acidic, coarse, and dry foods.
- If you wear prosthesis, wear them as least as possible. Don't wear them at night or when having mouth soreness. Clean the prosthesis twice a day by brushing it with a soft brush, the device should soak in chlorohexidine for 30 min.