

Side Effect Management for Oral & Neck Cancer Patients

Common Side Effects:

- Sore throat
- Trouble swallowing
- Mouth sores
- Dry mouth
- Changes in taste
- Thickening of saliva
- Swelling in the gums, throat or neck
- Jaw and/or neck stiffness
- Tooth decay (use recommendations that were given by dentist)
- Changes in skin texture
- Appetite loss
- Nausea
- Fatigue

Helpful Hints:

- If you have any questions regarding your chemotherapy, your nurse will help you be in touch with your medical oncology team.
- Start using lotion/Aquaphor to the treated area from the start of treatment.
- Drinks plenty of water or recommended fluids.
- Avoid hot, spicy, acidic, and/or abrasive foods.
- “Saline/soda rinses” help loosen secretions and maintain oral hygiene. Mix 1 tsp baking soda & 1 tsp salt to a glass of lukewarm water. Swish, gargle and spit. Do this at least 3 more times per day.
- Biotene products help decrease dry mouth.
- You must continue to swallow even when your throat hurts to prevent your throat/swallowing muscle from becoming weakened and “out of shape.”
- Gentle stretching of the neck muscles will help maintain range of motion. See Neck Muscle Exercises handout.
- It is important to meet frequently with the dietician.
- You must maintain your current weight throughout the course of your treatment.