

Dental and Mouth Care Services

Kellogg Cancer Center has a comprehensive oral assessment and treatment program. Your nurse will review ways to help you care for your mouth during treatment. A Mouth Care Assessment and Intervention Plan are provided if you experience oral complications from your cancer treatment. Your team—including a dentist, pharmacist, medical oncology doctor and nurse—will review and discuss the approach that is best for you. Your doctor or nurse will provide you with referrals as needed.

Routine dental care should be performed by your regular dentist. You may wish to alert him or her that you are being treated at Kellogg Cancer Center.

Note: Routine teeth cleaning should not be done while on chemotherapy. Discuss any planned dental work with your oncology doctor or nurse.

Managing Mouth Sores

Mouth sores are a common side effect of certain chemotherapy drugs. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy kill rapidly dividing cells, such as cancer cells. However, the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, including the mouth and throat, is made up of cells that divide rapidly. This is why the GI tract is especially susceptible to damage to the mouth (mouth sores) and/or throat, which is also called “mucositis.”

Symptoms of mouth sores may occur three to 10 days following chemotherapy treatment. You may experience a burning sensation followed by redness and a sore (ulcer). Usually these sores are painful, which makes it difficult to eat or drink. It is important to let your nurse or doctor know if you get mouth sores, because you may need special medication to help you heal and control the pain.

Preventing Mouth Sores

Practice good oral hygiene:

- Rinse your mouth with a saltwater solution two or three times per day.
- Brush your teeth two or three times per day with a soft toothbrush.

Your doctor may prescribe special medication to help you prevent mouth sores.