



## College of Dentistry

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## Chemotherapy Patient Information

### Problems and Solutions:

1. **Dry mouth** can occur when salivary glands are damaged with chemotherapy. Dental decay is the result. Prevention is good oral hygiene, prescription fluoride toothpaste like Prevident 5000®, the possible use of a prescription fluoride gel like Prevident® gel used in a mouthguard type tray 15-30 minutes daily, and for some chemotherapy patients the prescription Salagen® (pilocarpine) to stimulate salivary flow. Salagen® is begun at 5 mg three times per day up to 30 mg per day.
2. **Sore mouth** comes from irritation to the lining of the mouth and is best treated with topical anesthetics. An example for home therapy is mixing Benadryl® cough syrup (there is an alcohol free version) with Maalox® (1 teaspoon each) and used to swish for 30 seconds to one minute 4-6 times daily. Prescription viscous lidocaine can also be used. Don't use within 15 minutes of a meal or you could choke on food. Artificial salivas may help but tend to be expensive and do not taste good. Sips of water is the best advice.
3. **Loss of or altered taste** can occur from chemotherapy. No treatment helps but a moist mouth is more conducive to taste.
4. **Bleeding gums** is a result of the infection and irritation and possible immune system suppression. Good oral hygiene is the main key. Judicious use of Listerine® or similar commercial mouthwash (1 tablespoon 3-4 times ONLY each day might help.
5. **Infections like Candidiasis** are common and treated with prescription medications like Nystatin®, clotrimazole or even pills of Diflucan® at 200 mg to start and 100 mg daily for 2 weeks.
6. **Toothbrushing and flossing** are extremely important and should be used regularly unless blood counts are too low (absolute neutrophil counts under 1000) or platelets are too low (under 20,000 or so). Use a soft toothbrush only and if necessary soften it further under hot water prior to use.
7. **Other**. Biotene products are generally available and helpful for most people for toothbrushing, mouthwashing and overall oral hygiene.