



PATIENT EDUCATION

Mouth care and mucositis during radiation

A plain-language guide for patients and families. Bring this to your visit. It does not replace advice from your clinician.

What is mucositis?

Mucositis is soreness or rawness of the lining of the mouth or throat. It can happen when radiation includes the mouth, throat, or neck, or when certain chemotherapy is given. The lining turns over quickly, so it shows injury sooner than skin. It is painful but temporary when supported well.

What you may notice

- A scalded feeling, ulcers, or white patches
- Pain with spicy, acidic, or crunchy foods
- Thick saliva or a dry mouth at the same time
- Trouble wearing dentures comfortably

Everyday mouth care

Rinse often with the salt-and-baking-soda mix or the rinse your clinic gives you. Do not use alcohol mouthwash. Brush with a very soft brush. Keep dentures out when they rub sores. Choose soft, moist, lukewarm foods. Pain medicine before meals can make eating possible.

Where CureRays may fit. See the dentist your oncologist recommends **before** a long head-and-neck course when there is time. During treatment, call us for new white patches, fever, or pain that stops all drinking. Confirm rinses and gels with your care team — some “natural” oils irritate sores.

What treatment usually involves

- A mask or bite positioner may be used so the beam stays on target
- We check your mouth at least weekly during a head-and-neck course
- Feeding-tube talks happen early if swallowing looks risky — that is planning, not failure



Practical tips from clinic teaching

- Rinse after every meal and snack. Do not skip mouth care. No alcohol mouthwash.
- Soft or liquid foods: smoothies, shakes, warm (not hot) soups, mashed potatoes, pasta, yogurt, pudding. Thin oatmeal with extra liquid. Blend fruit. Moisten with gravy, broth, yogurt, or a little olive or canola oil.
- Use a straw to bypass sores. Small bites. Ice chips (do not chew ice). Frozen grapes or melon if seeds do not irritate.
- Avoid dry foods (chips, pretzels, tough meat, raw vegetables), citrus and tomato, spicy or salty food, alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco.
- **Honey (head-and-neck RT, if your team agrees):** 1 tablespoon in the mouth 15 minutes before radiation, 1 tablespoon 15 minutes after, and 1 tablespoon about 6 hours later. Let it dissolve before you swallow.
- **Glutamine (if they recommend it):** brands such as Glutasolv or Healios. Teaching amounts are often about 10 g powder in water three times a day, or 15 g twice a day; Healios labeling is often 5 g twice a day. Swish and gargle 30 to 60 seconds, then swallow. Confirm the exact product with your nurse.

When to call the clinic

- You cannot swallow saliva or medicines
- Fever, spreading redness, or a foul taste with swelling
- White patches that look different from the usual coating — we may treat thrush
- Weight dropping because eating hurts too much

Questions to ask

- Which rinse and which pain plan should I use this week?
- Do I need a feeding-tube discussion now or only if things worsen?
- How should I care for dentures or implants during sores?
- Who is my dental contact if a tooth flares during treatment?

How to schedule or learn more

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