

ONCOLOGY

After Chemotherapy Care Instructions

Mucositis

What is mucositis?

Mucositis is described as sores in the mouth, throat, stomach, rectum, or vagina due to inflammation of the mucous membranes. Mucositis can be caused by cancer therapy (chemotherapy or radiation).

If mucositis is not controlled, it may lead to poor nutrition and infection in the bloodstream. It is helpful to know the signs and symptoms of mucositis and ways that you can prevent and control it.

What are the symptoms of mucositis?

Mucositis may cause you to have:

- color changes in the mouth (redness or white patches);
- mouth lesions or sores that may begin to bleed;
- discomfort and pain in the mouth or upper stomach area, or in the vaginal or rectal area;
- pain, tenderness, or swelling in the vaginal or rectal area;
- pain during sexual intercourse;
- change in taste;
- difficulty eating and swallowing; or
- diarrhea

What can I do at home to care for myself?

It is important to have good nutrition. Eating high-protein foods and drinking adequate fluids promotes mucous membrane healing. It is best to have small frequent meals that are soft and easy to chew.

Practice daily oral hygiene by doing the following:

- Brush your teeth regularly with a toothbrush that has soft bristles. Change your toothbrush regularly. A soft sponge swab may be used when there is a risk of bleeding.
- Use bland rinses, such as salt water and baking soda, after meals and at bedtime.

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- Avoid irritating and drying agents such as acidic, hot, or spicy foods; rough foods; tobacco; alcohol; glycerin lemon swabs; and commercial mouthwashes.
- Avoid water pik-like devices that may move bacteria into mouth sores.

If you have *vaginal* mucositis, keep your vaginal area clean and use sanitary pads rather than tampons.

If you have *rectal* mucositis, keep your rectal area clean. Use a sitz bath or warm water to rinse after having a bowel movement. Do not place anything in your rectum, such as a thermometer or suppository, and do not have an enema.

***When should I call
my physician?***

Tell your physician right away if you have signs of mucositis or your symptoms get worse. If you cannot reach your health care team or your symptoms get worse, go to Urgent Care or the Emergency Department.