



Cornerstone Dental Group

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Chemotherapy and Oral Hygiene

There is a risk of harmful bacteria getting into the bloodstream if oral hygiene care is inadequate. This starts with a very gentle but effective toothbrushing technique.

Optimum plaque control measures may include gentle oral rinsing, increased baking soda-saline rinses, toothbrush bristles softened in hot water or a super soft toothbrush. Sponge toothettes, gauze and/or cotton-tipped applicators do not adequately remove plaque and should be supplemented with other measures. Dipping a sponge toothette in chlorhexidine rinse may increase effectiveness. Regular tooth brushing and flossing should resume as soon as possible. Toothbrushes should be changed frequently and/or disinfected in chlorhexidine. Be cautious about eating crunchy or sharp foods that may damage friable oral tissues. Toothpicks should not be used.

Alcohol-based mouthwashes and full-strength peroxide solutions or gels should not be used due to their drying and irritating effects. Peroxide solutions are acidic and, if used, should be followed by a neutralizing rinse, such as a bicarbonate water solution.

The preventive use of chlorhexidine rinse may help suppress bacteria but should not replace the mechanical removal of plaque with a toothbrush.

The mouth may be rinsed with a baking soda-saline solution and followed by a plain water rinse several times daily. The solution is prepared by mixing 1-2 tsp(s) of baking soda and 1/2 tsp salt with one quart of water. The salt may be eliminated according to patient preference. The solution must not be swallowed.

Patients who experience frequent emesis (vomiting) should be encouraged to rinse thoroughly with a baking soda and water solution. Brushing the teeth without first neutralizing the gastric acids in the mouth may result in the etching of the enamel.

Patients must not wear dentures while they sleep or when their dentures irritate ulcerated mucosal tissues. Dentures must be brushed daily with a denture brush and soaked in an antimicrobial cleanser or mild detergent. An effective soaking solution for dentures *without* metal parts is made by mixing one teaspoon of chlorine bleach, two teaspoons of Calgon water softener, and one cup of water. After brushing and soaking, the dentures should be rinsed well and stored in clean water or a new chlorhexidine solution. Patients should cleanse their tongue and oral tissues with gauze or a soft toothbrush.

Measures for preventing tooth demineralization and decay include a neutral fluoride rinse or a toothpaste with higher fluoride concentration, such as Prevident 5000. It is important not to rinse your mouth for at least 30 minutes after using these products.

For more information, contact the BC Cancer Agency at www.bccancer.bc.ca.

Thank you, and if there are any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the office.