Taking Care Of Your Sore Or Dry Mouth

A sore or dry mouth may happen for many different reasons including:

- The side effect of a medicine you are taking.
- A disease which causes you to make less spit.
- Treatment for cancer, such as cancer medicines or radiation therapy.
- Damage to nerves in your head or neck.

Sometimes, treatment for other health problems may have to stop until the stomatitis gets better. Tell your doctor right away if you notice it getting worse.

HOME CARE

Your doctor may want you to:

- Use artificial saliva.
- Use medicine on the sore places.
- Gargle with a baking soda mouthwash (1/2 teaspoon baking soda mixed in with 4 cups of water).
- Gargle with medicated mouthwash.

Food

- Small meals and snacks may work better that fewer large meals.
- Eat food cold or at room temperature -- not hot.
- Suck on ice-chips, or try popsicles and frozen juice bars, ice-cream, and watermelon. Do not have citrus flavors such as orange, pineapple, or lemon. These can sting the lining of the mouth.
- Eat soft foods such as yogurt, bananas, canned fruit, mashed potatoes, oatmeal, rice, eggs, cottage cheese, macaroni and cheese, jello and puddings.
- Microwave raw vegetables and fruits to soften them.
- Puree cooked food in a blender if you want to make it even smoother and easier to eat.
- Make dry food moist by using olive oil, gravy or mild sauces. Try dipping foods in liquids.
- Keep a glass of water or plastic squirt bottle nearby. Take sips often throughout the day.
- Limit caffeine which makes the mouth drier.
- Suck on hard, sugarless sour candy or chew sugarless gum to help make more saliva.
- These foods may be hard to swallow or may make your mouth hurt:
  - Fizzy sodas or drinks.
  - Alcohol such as beer, wine or liquor.
  - Citrus juices such as orange, pineapple, or grapefruit juice, lemonade or limeade.
  - Acidic food such as tomatoes and tomato sauces.
  - Salty or spicy food.
  - Foods or drinks that are very hot.
  - Hard or crunchy food such as raw vegetables, granola or toast.

Mouth Care

- Wash your hands well with soap and water before doing mouth care.
- Brush your teeth at least 2 times a day. If you can, also brush after each meal. At least rinse your mouth with water after each meal and after drinking a sweet drink.
- When you brush your teeth, brush slowly in small circles. Do not brush side to side. Brush gently so you do not hurt your gums and make sores on them.
- You can use regular toothpastes, but stay away from ones that have sodium laurel sulfate in them. This is what makes them foam. Some toothpaste will help you make saliva, ask your doctor.
- Choose a mouthwash that is antibacterial. Do not use mouthwash with alcohol. If your mouthwash feels too strong for your sore mouth, you can mix it with warm water.

- Every day, use dental floss or dental tape to clean between your teeth.
- Use a lanolin-based (check the label) lip balm to keep your lips from getting dry.

- If you wear dentures or bridges:
  - You may need to leave them out until your doctor tells you to start wearing them again.
  - If you can wear them daily, take them out at night. Soak them in warm water or denture solution. Also, take your dentures out as much as you can during the day and when you use mouthwash.
  - After each meal, brush your gums gently with a soft brush, and rinse your mouth with water.
  - If your dentures rub on your gums and are making a sore spot, have your dentist check and fix your dentures right away.

- Other Hints:
  - Do not smoke or chew tobacco. This can cause severe mouth ulcers.
  - Use saliva substitutes, when your mouth feels dry.
  - Run a humidifier in your bedroom at night, especially if you snore or breathe through your mouth while sleeping.

GET HELP IF:

- If your mouth gets more painful or dry.
- If you have any questions.

Document Released: 10/15/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.