

How to Care for Yourself **After** Head and Neck Radiation



EATING AND DRINKING	<p><i>Your Registered Dietitian (RD) will continue to help you with your eating and drinking.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To keep your weight the same and your swallowing working continue to eat high-protein and high-calorie soft or blended foods.• Start eating regular foods when the pain stops and chewing and swallowing are easier.• Return to a regular, balanced diet according to Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.• Aim to drink 8 cups of non carbonated fluid each day (alcohol and caffeine free).• Keep your weight the same for the first 6 to 8 weeks after you have finished your treatment.
SWALLOWING	<p><i>Your Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) will continue to help you with swallowing.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You may go for another swallowing assessment 8 weeks after your last treatment to see how you are swallowing. <p>Swallowing Study and Diet Changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue with the same diet until told differently.• Continue to follow the Swallowing Safety guidelines (<i>See "Before Radiation" sheet</i>). <p>Swallowing Exercises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do each exercise 5 to 10, 3 times a day for at least 6 months after your treatment is finished. <p>Radiation Changes to Swallowing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short-term side effects of treatment may get better 1 to 2 months after your treatment is finished.
ORAL CARE	<p><i>Your Dental Oncology team will continue to help you with your mouth care.</i></p> <p>Flossing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Floss at least once daily if you are able.• Use a topical anesthetic rinse prior to flossing, if necessary. <p>Brushing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a topical anesthetic rinse before brushing.• Use a soft toothbrush.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Maintain gentle brushing after meals and before bed.◦ To clear your mouth use a wet cloth soaked in mouth rinse. <p>Rinsing (<i>See "Mouth Rinse Bland Recipe"</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rinse with mouth rinse after:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Brushing◦ Flossing◦ Eating• Rinse every 1 to 2 hours while you are awake.• Continue to use your fluoride trays daily, or use fluoridated tooth paste to prevent tooth decay. <p><i>*Inform your Dental Team if you are no longer able to use your fluoride toothpaste or tray.*</i></p> <p>Oral Moisturizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moisturize nasal passages through the night with a steam vapourizer in your room.• Moisturize with mouth rinse and lubricants more often.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Avoid petroleum jelly and glycerin products.• Use sugarless gum or lozenges to stimulate saliva. <p>Lip Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use water-soluble, wax-based, or oil-based lubricants often.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Do not apply petroleum jelly.
SKIN CARE	<p><i>Your Radiation Treatment team will continue to help you with your skin care. Continue to care for your skin as advised by your treatment team until your skin has healed.</i></p> <p><i>Your skin will take time to heal.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your skin will start to improve 2 to 3 weeks after you have finished your treatments.• Your skin colour may take 3 to 4 weeks to return to normal.• Your skin will be sensitive after it has healed. <i>Continue</i> to follow your skin care as outlined on the <i>"Before/During Radiation"</i> sheets.• Use unscented water-based body lotions or creams 4 times per day.• Avoid sun exposure in the treatment area.• Use a sunscreen when your skin has healed (SPF 30 or greater). <p>Hair loss may be temporary or permanent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your hair in the treatment area may grow back 3 to 6 months after treatment.• This new hair may be thinner and/or may feel different.
TUBE FEEDING AND CARE	<p><i>If you have a feeding tube, your Registered Dietitian (RD) and healthcare team will work with you to manage your tube feeding and care.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue your tube feed and work with your RD to adjust your feeds as you start to eat and drink more by mouth.• Your feeding tube may be removed by your doctor or surgeon when you have kept your weight the same for at least 1 month without using your feeding tube for nutrition.

Oral Care

MOUTH RINSE BLAND RECIPE



1 level teaspoon
(5 mL) of salt



1 level teaspoon
(5 mL) of baking soda



4 cups (1 L)
of water

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MOUTH RINSE

- Mix 1 teaspoon of baking soda and 1 teaspoon of salt with 4 cups of water.
- Put the mouthwash in a container with a lid.
- The mouthwash should be kept at room temperature.
- Discard at the end of each day and make a new batch.

HOW TO USE YOUR MOUTH RINSE

- Shake well before using.
- Rinse and gargle with one tablespoon (15 mL) and then spit out.
- Repeat 2 or 3 times at each use.
- Use mouthwash every 2 hours during the day.

DENTURE CARE

- Keep your dentures out as much as possible.
- Remove dentures, plates and prostheses before brushing.
- Brush and rinse dentures after meals and before bed.
- Soak dentures in cleansing solution for at least 8 hours.
- If you are on antifungal therapy, soak in anti-fungal solution.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE OF FLUORIDE TRAYS

- Brush and floss before wearing trays.
- Fill the grooves of the trays 1/3 full with gel.
- Insert tray and spit out any excess gel.
- Leave the tray in for 5 minutes.
 - Use at bedtime for longer lasting results.
 - Brush trays and air dry after each use.
 - Do not** use hot water to clean trays (hot water will distort the tray).
 - Do not** eat, drink or rinse for 30 minutes after tray use.

Inform your Dental team if you are no longer able to use your fluoride trays.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT YOUR CARE:
