

CAMP HILL, Pa. (Oct. 11, 2023) — The side effects of chemotherapy treatments for breast cancer can cause oral health problems. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, United Concordia Dental offers suggestions to help keep your mouth, teeth and gums healthy while undergoing cancer therapy.

"Chemotherapy affects all cells throughout the body, especially those that regenerate themselves daily," said Anthony Warren, DDS, dental director, United Concordia Dental. "In the mouth, this can lead to sore and inflamed tissue, bleeding gums, dry mouth and other serious oral health conditions that should be closely monitored."

An effective oral hygiene routine is important before and during cancer treatment to help reduce the adverse effects of chemotherapy in the mouth. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Brush your teeth, gums and tongue after every meal and at bedtime with a soft toothbrush to avoid trauma to the oral tissues.
- Use toothpaste and chewing gum that contain xylitol to prevent decay and reduce the chance of cavities.
- Floss your teeth gently daily to reduce inflammation and to help prevent uncontrolled bleeding from the gums. If you notice tenderness, avoid the areas that are bleeding or sore, but keep flossing your other teeth.
- Rinse with alcohol-free mouthwash to remove food particles left after brushing and flossing. Mouthwashes with alcohol can upset the natural balance of saliva that is necessary to flush out bacteria.
- Keep dentures clean and make sure to remove them at night to prevent bacterial growth that may lead to irritation and infection for patients with compromised immune systems.
- Avoid dental treatment for one week after chemotherapy, as these therapies may upset the healthy balance of bacteria in the mouth.



"You should also visit your dentist before beginning chemotherapy to address any concerns and check for infections in your mouth that might complicate care or suppress your immune system," said Warren.

To learn more, visit the [Breast Cancer Resources for Dental Health](#) section at [UnitedConcordia.com](#).

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