

Radiotherapy department

# Mouth care during radiotherapy to the head and neck

It is very important to keep your mouth clean during radiotherapy to the mouth or throat.

It can:

- help to reduce pain/soreness from the radiotherapy
- help to prevent infection
- help you to continue eating and drinking.

You should use the following mouthwashes throughout your radiotherapy:

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## Saltwater (saline) and sodium bicarbonate (bicarbonate of soda) solutions

- To make these 2 separate solutions
  - Dissolve 1 level teaspoonful of household salt in a pint of water
  - Dissolve 1 level teaspoonful of sodium bicarbonate in a pint of water.
- Use 10 – 20 mls of each solution at least 4 times a day: after meals and before bed.
- Rinse your mouth 3 or 4 times on each occasion, spitting out the solution each time.
- **Hint: Bring a small bottle of the saltwater mouthwash with you when you come for your radiotherapy so you can rinse your mouth when you're here.**

## Difflam/Benzydamine mouthwash

- Use **Difflam/Benzydamine** mouthwash 4 times a day. It should be **AS WELL** as the salt/sodium bicarbonate solutions. If Difflam/Benzydamine stings, try diluting it half and half with water.
  - After week 1 of radiotherapy, you should aim to rinse your mouth out at least every 2 hours or a minimum of 6 times a day.
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Please **do not use** Corsodyl [chlorhexidine].

Check with your doctor or nurse at The Christie before using any other mouthwashes.



## Further advice:

- Don't smoke.
- Drink at least 4 pints of non-alcoholic fluids daily.
- Brush your teeth twice a day, with fluoride toothpaste using a soft baby-toothbrush. You can also dip a soft baby-toothbrush in the Benzydamine and use it to gently clean around the lining of your mouth. This is especially helpful if you have been told you have oral thrush.
- If your mouth is sore leave dentures out whenever possible.
- It is important to take painkillers if your mouth or throat are sore. They help to make your mouth more comfortable and to allow you to eat and drink and carry out your mouth care. Liquid painkillers can also be diluted with water **AFTER** you have measured out the dose if they sting your mouth. Do not hesitate to ask to see your doctor or nurse when you are at The Christie if you need painkillers.

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **[the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net)**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for  
urgent support and specialist advice  
**The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658**  
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