

Breast Cancer and your oral health



In the **United States**,
1 out of 8 women and **1 out of 1,000 men**
will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime.

Worldwide,
breast cancer is the
most common
cancer among women.



Gum disease is linked to an increased risk of breast cancer.
Many breast cancer patients experience oral health complications from treatment.

Breast cancer treatments that can cause oral side effects:

Chemotherapy • Radiation therapy • Stem cell transplants • Bisphosphonates
Pain medications, antidepressants/anti-anxiety medications and other prescriptions
Supplements and other natural remedies

Some side effects can include:

Dysgeusia – metallic, salty, foul or rancid taste sensations

Xerostomia – dryness of the mouth or thickened saliva

Stomatitis – mouth sores and ulcers

Oral mucositis – inflammation and ulcers of gums, tongue and mouth tissues

Dysphagia – difficulty or discomfort swallowing

Dental caries – cavities

Infections of the mouth and/or throat

Peripheral painful traumatic trigeminal neuropathy – a phantom toothache

Trismus – also known as lockjaw

Candida infection – oral thrush or yeast infection

Osteonecrosis of the jaw – jaw bone cell death and breakdown



It's important to talk about any symptoms you experience with your dentist and cancer care team. When side effects are left unaddressed or are not able to be managed, larger problems could develop. Depending on the level of severity, your doctor may need to alter your treatment.

Take action for your oral health before and during treatment:

Talk to your dentist about your diagnosis as soon as possible. You may need to schedule a dental appointment prior to beginning treatment, especially if you haven't had a checkup recently.

Undergo any dental procedures you may need before treatment starts and the immune system's and body's ability to heal itself is compromised.

Allow time to heal from any dental treatment before beginning cancer treatment, if possible. Your dentist can recommend how much healing time you need between dental procedures and receiving cancer treatment.

Connect your dentist and physicians. Your dentist should be aware of your treatment plan to better serve your needs, and your cancer care team should know how treatment impacts your mouth.

Consider palliative care specialists for ongoing oral side effects and complications. Ask your doctor for a referral if needed.

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