

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:

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

- To make these two 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 four times a day: after meals and before bed.
- Rinse your mouth three or four times on each occasion, spitting out the solution each time.
- After week one of radiotherapy, you should rinse your mouth out at least every 2 hours.
- **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.**

Other mouthwashes

- You can use Difflam mouthwash 4 times a day. This should be **as well as** the salt/sodium bicarbonate mouthwashes; it is not a substitute.
- If Difflam stings, try diluting it half and half with water.
- Please don't 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.
- Leave dentures out whenever possible if your mouth is sore.
- 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. 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.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **patient.information@christie.nhs.uk**

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For more information about The Christie and our services, please visit **www.christie.nhs.uk** or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.

Contact The Christie Hotline for urgent support and specialist advice

**The Christie Hotline:
0161 446 3658**

Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

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