

## Introduction

When you are unwell you may have problems with your mouth. This leaflet will provide guidance to help you to be more comfortable and avoid any complications.

If you are worried about your mouth problems or they persist, your Doctor or Nurse will always be happy to discuss these with you and prescribe any relevant products.

If it is appropriate keep regular appointments with your dentist.

## What general advice can you give me?

It is important to keep your mouth clean and moist at all times. Try to continue with your regular mouth care routine. The following suggestions may help:

- Check your mouth regularly
- Brush your teeth twice a day using a fluoride toothpaste
- Use a soft baby toothbrush – if you usually use an electric toothbrush you may need to have an extra soft bristle head

- Avoid becoming dehydrated. Drink small amounts frequently
- Regular (alcohol free) mouthwashes will help
- Rinse your mouth after meals using warm water
- Soak dentures overnight in water or a commercial product such as Steradent ®

## What shall I do if my mouth is dry and my lips are cracked?

A dry mouth is caused by a lack of saliva and there are various causes. These include some medicines (including painkillers), oxygen therapy, mouth breathing and anxiety. The following suggestions may help.

- Choose moist meals using gravies and sauces
- Cool drinks, sips of water, ice chips, ice lollies
- Cut up food so that less chewing is needed
- Avoid alcohol, very hot drinks and mouthwashes containing alcohol or glycerine
- Fresh (or tinned and unsweetened) pineapple may help but avoid acidic fruits

such as oranges or grapefruit if your mouth is sore

- Try boiled sweets and sugar free gum
- Lip salve/balm or Aloe Vera gel is good for dry or cracked lips
- Artificial saliva products, for example, gel or spray may be prescribed for you by your Doctor or Nurse

## Please note

If you are using mouth sponges take extra care as the sponge can become detached from the stick. **The sticks must not be left to soak.**

## What shall I do if my mouth is sore?

- Have nourishing milky drinks rather than fruit juice
- Try cold foods such as yoghurt, ice cream, jelly and soft foods such as porridge, soup, fish, milk puddings
- Avoid hot and spicy foods
- Your Doctor or Nurse would provide further advice

Thrush is a common oral fungal infection, usually identified by white spots, discomfort and soreness.

It may also be painful to swallow. This is easily treated and medication can be prescribed.

### **Why does my food taste different?**

Illness or medication can alter the taste of some things. Using herbs or spices to increase flavours can help. Often this is a temporary problem.

### **What can I do about bad breath and a furred tongue?**

Bad breath (halitosis) can be caused by some of the other oral problems mentioned but can be a symptom of plaque, tooth decay and gum disease. Good oral hygiene including care of dentures will often solve the problem. A gargle mouthwash on waking and after meals is an effective way of minimising the problem. Increase your fluid intake if possible.

A coated tongue needs checking in case this is a sign of infection. Otherwise gentle brushing with a soft toothbrush can help clean the tongue.

Complementary therapy using aromatherapy products is considered to be effective and beneficial for most oral problems. Your Doctor or Nurse may be able refer you for this treatment.

**Do remember if you are concerned about mouth problems discuss these with your healthcare professional.**

St. Gemma's Hospice  
329 Harrogate Road  
Moortown  
Leeds  
LS17 6QD

0113 218 5500  
email [postmaster@st-gemma.co.uk](mailto:postmaster@st-gemma.co.uk)  
[www.st-gemma.co.uk](http://www.st-gemma.co.uk)

Registered Charity No. 1015941



## **Keeping your mouth healthy**

## **Advice for Patients**