

Mouth care advice for Patients following Head and Neck Cancer surgery



It is important to maintain a good level of oral hygiene following your surgery to help avoid infection and other dental issues. It is common to feel anxious about caring for your mouth after your surgery but following this advice will help you achieve this safely:

- Brush your teeth as best you can twice a day taking extra time and care around your operation site. To start with, you may not be able to access all of your teeth, gradually this will improve.
- Use a fluoride toothpaste; you may prefer to use a mild flavour.
- You may find a small-headed toothbrush is easier to start with to help you gain access. Change your toothbrush when bristles are worn.
- You have been prescribed mouthwash(es) please use as directed by your health professional or mouth care nurse.
- Avoid spicy, citrus, salty and acidic foods and drinks as these could cause your mouth some discomfort initially.
- If you have dentures, clean these at least twice a day with a toothbrush and liquid hand soap. Remove dentures at night unless you have been advised otherwise.
- It is best to keep the area free from food debris by gently rinsing your mouth with warm salt water after meals (dissolve a $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of kitchen salt in a glass or cup of warm water)
- Keep your lips moist using a lip balm regularly
- Avoid smoking and alcohol consumption
- Visit your dentist regularly

If you have any problems or concerns, please do get in touch with one of the teams:

Queen Victoria Hospital – 01342 414 000

Mouth Care Leads – 01342 416 610

Margaret Duncombe Ward – 01342 414 450

Maxillofacial Unit – 01342 414 708

Macmillan Information Centre – 01342 414 369

If you have an urgent concern, please call our main switchboard and ask for the on call Maxillofacial Doctor.

Product	Usage	Product instructions	Advice
Dry mouth gel * *Some products contain milk extracts and are not suitable for patients with dairy allergies or vegan patients.	Patients who are suffering with a severe dry mouth.	Using a small, softheaded toothbrush, cotton bud or your clean fingertip, apply a pea-sized amount of gel to the inside of your cheeks, gums and roof of mouth. You can apply this every 2 hours if required.	Your GP can prescribe these for you. Use as directed. Please read the product information sheet.
Non-foaming toothpaste (SLS free) * *Some products contain milk extracts and are not suitable for patients with dairy allergies or vegan patients.	Patients with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe dry mouth • Sensitive/painful mouth • Swallowing difficulties • Intraoral wounds e.g. Head and neck cancer surgery • Any other adult patients who would benefit from the non-foaming element. 	To be used in the same way as a regular toothpaste.	Your GP can prescribe these for you. Use as directed. Please read the product information sheet.
Chlorhexidine mouthwash	Patients with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sore or painful mouth • Limited mouth opening • Difficulty with tooth-brushing in areas of the mouth 	Use 4 x daily for maximum 2 weeks unless advised otherwise. Gently rinse the mouthwash around the mouth for a minute before spitting this out.	This particular mouthwash aims to reduce the amount of harmful bacteria within the mouth but should not be used for longer than advised by your doctor or dentist. Please read the product information sheet.

360 Toothbrush	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To aid oral hygiene for patients with a sore mouth or limited mouth opening.• Product can be used to apply dry mouth gel.	To be used in the same way as a standard toothbrush.	Do not rotate in the mouth, bite or chew. Replace toothbrush as you would with a normal toothbrush.
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Please keep all of the above products out of reach from children and vulnerable adults.



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Mouth Care

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