

Oral Evaluation Before Cancer Treatment Makes a Difference

A pretreatment oral evaluation can identify potential problems and help educate the patient about the importance of good oral care. This evaluation can be conducted by a knowledgeable dentist in the community or by a hospital-based dental team. The evaluation includes a thorough examination of hard and soft tissues, as possible sources of infection. Before cancer treatment begins, the dentist will take the following steps:

- Identify and treat existing infections, problem teeth, and tissue injury or trauma.
- Stabilize or eliminate potential sites of infection.
- Remove orthodontic bands if highly stomatotoxic chemotherapy is planned or if the bands will be in the radiation field.
- Evaluate dentures and appliances for comfort and fit.
- Perform oral surgery at least 2 weeks prior to the initiation of radiation therapy to allow healing, and at least 7 to 10 days before myelosuppressive chemotherapy begins.
- In adults receiving head and neck radiation, extract teeth that may pose a future problem to prevent extraction-induced osteonecrosis.
- In children, consider extracting highly mobile primary teeth and teeth that are expected to exfoliate during treatment.
- Instruct patients on oral hygiene, use of fluoride gel, nutrition, and the need to avoid alcohol and tobacco.

During the examination, the patient will also learn about home care regimen to protect mouth tissues and minimize oral complications. The dentist or hygienist will instruct the patient on special brushing and flossing techniques, mouth rinses, and other approaches to keep the mouth as moist and clean as possible to reduce the risk on infection and pain.

To add

Regular Hygiene appointments will be prescribed for postcare radiation and chemotherapy