

## Dental and Gum Problems

Cancer and cancer treatment can cause tooth decay and other problems for your teeth and gums. For example, radiation to the mouth can affect your salivary glands, making your mouth dry and increasing your risk of cavities. Changes in eating habits also may add to the problem. Your doctor and dentist should work closely together to fix any problems with your teeth before you start treatment. If you eat often or eat a lot of sweets, you may need to brush your teeth more often. Brushing after each meal or snack is a good idea. Here are some other ideas for preventing dental problems:

- Be sure to let your doctor know about any dental problems you are having.
- Be sure to see your dentist regularly. Patients who are receiving treatment that affects the mouth for example, radiation to the head and neck - may need to see the dentist more often than usual.
- Use a soft toothbrush. Ask your doctor, nurse, or dentist to suggest a special kind of toothbrush and/or toothpaste if your gums are very sensitive.
- Rinse your mouth with warm water when your gums and mouth are sore.
- If you are eating foods high in sugar or foods that stick to your teeth, be sure to brush or rinse your mouth afterward so that the sugar won't damage your teeth, or use sugar-free varieties. (Sorbitol, a sugar substitute that is contained in many sugar-free foods, can cause diarrhea in many people. If diarrhea is a problem for you, check the labels of sugar-free foods before you buy them and limit your use of them.)