

## Contact details

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Luton and Dunstable Hospital out of hours service ☎ **01582 491166**  
and **ask for the maxillofacial doctor on call.**

## Patient Information

# How to look after your mouth and teeth, during and after radiotherapy

Oral and Maxillofacial  
Department

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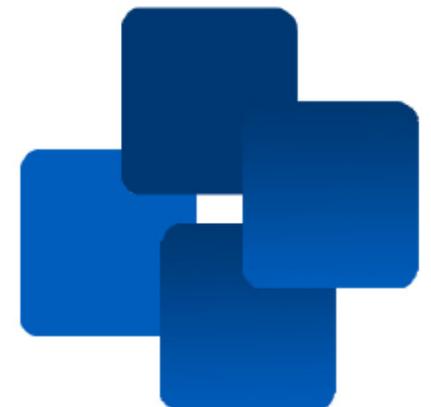
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## Introduction

Radiotherapy to the head and neck can cause some long lasting side-effects including a sore mouth and reduced amount of saliva, causing dry mouth.

Saliva has different functions and is very important in protecting your teeth against decay. With a reduced amount of saliva you will be more susceptible to dental decay during and after radiotherapy, and therefore extra care should be taken with oral hygiene to help minimise this.

## Regular dental check-ups

It is important to see your dentist regularly to make sure that you are provided with regular cleaning and dental care, and receive any advice that you may need.

## Dental extractions

As your jaw bone will be exposed to radiation, it is very important to be aware that if any dental extractions are required whilst receiving radiotherapy, **these should only be done in a hospital setting**. The reason for this is that you are at a greater risk of infections and compromised healing following extractions.



## General care

- Avoid sugary foods and drinks in between meals.
- Avoid acidic drinks, such as fizzy drinks and fruit juices.
- Do jaw exercises as advised by your specialist to prevent jaw stiffness.
- Gently use floss or tape daily to clean between your teeth (but check with your specialist doctor or nurse if you're having chemotherapy or radiotherapy).
- If you can brush your teeth, use a small soft toothbrush each night and morning, and after each meal.
- If your mouth is too sore please make sure that you at least clean around your teeth and gums with a piece of gauze.
- Use fluoride toothpaste and a non-alcohol based mouthwash as prescribed by your dentist. In case of discomfort, dilute the mouthwash with water.
- Dentures and obturators should be cleaned after each meal and taken out at night.
- Visit your dentist and/or hygienist every 3-6 months.
- Inspect your mouth daily for signs of infection (ask your dentist or specialist nurse what to look for).

**Unlike some other parts of the body, your mouth can be easily checked, so please do!**

## For dry mouth

- Take sips of water and rinse your mouth regularly during the day to keep your mouth moist.
- Please ask to see one of our doctors or visit your own GP for some saliva substitutes like gel or pastilles.