I. Few newly diagnosed cancer patients understand how their oral health will influence their quality of life as they become longer standing cancer survivors.¹

- Nearly 1/3⁴ of all cancer patients treated with cancer therapies or bone marrow transplants are at risk for oral complications.
- Cancer patient’s oral health complications:
  - **Reduce a patient’s quality of life** in turn reducing successful health care outcomes.²,³
  - **Increase health care costs because patients** need more: (1) bed side care, (2) medications such as opioids, analgesics, and antimicrobials, (3) nutritional support and (4) longer hospital stays.⁴
- There are numerous specific oral health care complications facing cancer survivors⁵:
  - Mucositis
    - 30% of cancer patients report having these mouth sores
    - These mouth sores can be associated with significant pain and distress which can lead to decreases in patient’s following through with cancer therapies.⁶,⁷
  - Xerostomia (dry mouth)
  - Oral bleeding
  - Nutritional compromise
  - Taste alterations
- Many cancer patients may additionally be at life-long risk for⁸:
  - Increased caries (cavities)
  - Periodontal disease (gingivitis or periodontitis)
  - Soft tissue necrosis
  - Osteoradionecrosis
  - Loose bone structure
  - Loose teeth
    - Tooth loss is associated with decreases in health-related quality of life, nutrition and possibly an increase in other systemic illness.⁹

II. The critically important message is that help is available.

a. **When a dental team joins with an oncology team, the risk of serious oral complications is reduced.¹⁰,¹¹,¹²**

  i. The management of good oral hygiene with a dental provider during and post cancer therapies can reduce mucositis, oral infection and the risk for osteoradionecrosis.¹³
References


