



## FURTHER HELP?

Your doctors and nurses should talk to you about the potential side effects of your cancer treatment. Talk to them if you are concerned about developing oral mucositis.



### How do I obtain Gelclair?

You can get Gelclair on an NHS prescription from your GP.

You may want to take this booklet with you when visiting your GP.

For more information on Gelclair, call us on 01249 466 966 Mon-Fri 8.30am-5.00pm or visit [www.gelclair.co.uk](http://www.gelclair.co.uk)



It's got oral mucositis covered



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# Your guide to ORAL MUCOSITIS



## WHAT IS ORAL MUCOSITIS?

Oral Mucositis is defined as soreness, inflammation or ulceration of the mouth lining, causing pain and discomfort.

In its mildest form, oral mucositis can make your mouth feel very tender, like the sensation of drinking a very hot cup of tea. At the other end of the scale, oral mucositis can develop into areas of inflamed, extremely sore ulcers. Sometimes these ulcers can become infected and even bleed. The symptoms of oral mucositis, regardless of severity, can last for six to eight weeks, although in some cases they may last for longer.

Oral mucositis can be distressing. You may find it difficult to eat or drink, or sometimes even talk. These additional complications may affect your treatment and may mean that it has to be temporarily delayed to allow the lining of your mouth to recover.

## WHAT CAUSES IT?

Oral mucositis can be caused by:

- Medical treatment (including chemotherapy and radiotherapy)
- Illness (including immunosuppressive)
- Oral surgery
- Dental complications e.g. abrasions from braces, dentures etc.
- Ageing
- Stress
- General malaise

There are things you can do to help keep your oral mucositis under control and to manage the pain, and these are covered in this leaflet. However, if you find that your oral mucositis is causing you distress, you should consult your doctor immediately.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO TREAT IT?

Responses to treatment can vary from person to person and may depend on the severity of the condition.

There are a variety of treatment options which can help you to manage the associated pain and discomfort, such as:

**Anaesthetic mouthwashes** can be used to numb the mouth and give some relief, although you may be advised not to eat or drink while your mouth is numb.

**Antibacterial mouthwashes** are useful if the mucositis is caused by infection, and can also form part of your general mouthcare programme.

**Painkillers** may also help. If you have difficulty swallowing these can be given in liquid form.

**Gelclair** is an oral gel which coats the surfaces of your mouth forming a thin protective layer over the sore areas. It does not numb the mouth and can be used in combination with other pain relief medications. The barrier formed by Gelclair can make it more comfortable for you to eat and drink and can provide relief for up to seven hours.

Gelclair can be used in conjunction with other treatment options and your healthcare professional may have other ways to manage oral mucositis, so do ask for advice.



## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

There are a number of ways to help keep your mouth healthy. It is a good idea to visit your dentist regularly, especially if you are about to start treatment with chemotherapy. They can make sure your mouth and gums are in good condition.

You should clean your teeth or dentures every morning and evening. A soft-bristled or child's toothbrush may be more comfortable. Also, flossing your teeth regularly helps keep your mouth healthy (ask your doctor or dentist first, as your gums may be more likely to bleed).

You should try and avoid things that may sting the inside of your mouth, for example acidic drinks like orange and tomato juice, alcohol, cigarettes and spicy, salty, garlicky and vinegary foods. Drinking plenty of fluids, such as water, squash, tea, weak coffee or herbal teas should also help.

