

## Support from family and friends

If you are unable to maintain your oral hygiene independently, friends and family may wish to assist. The nursing staff will provide a mouth care tray which will include solution and sponges to maintain good oral hygiene.

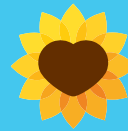
Guidance always needs to be sourced from the nursing staff prior to the use of the mouth care tray by family and friends. We want to ensure the correct procedure is followed as there is risk of damage to the delicate lining of the mouth or choking if not used correctly.

- Never leave sponges soaking in water.
- Never pour liquid into a patient's mouth when drowsy or sleeping as there is a high risk of choking/ aspiration.
- Always ask for guidance and support from the nursing staff if unsure of the correct procedure.
- Do not use Vaseline or lip balm if oxygen is in use – seek advice.

## References:

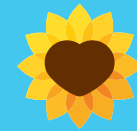
Palliative Care – Oral Problems Clinical Knowledge Summary 2012

[www.cancerhelp.org.uk](http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk)



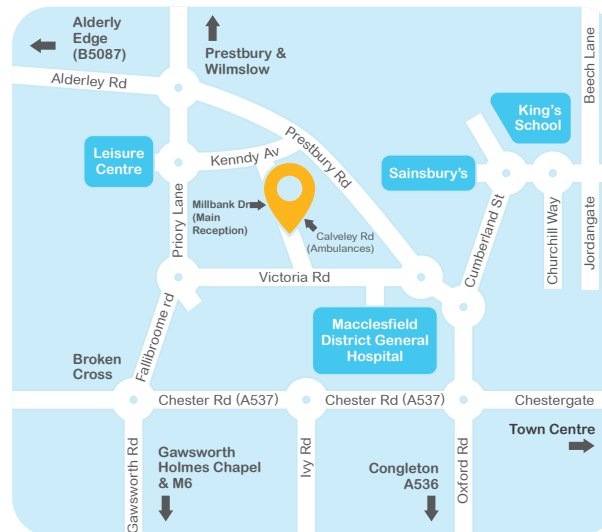
**East Cheshire Hospice**

Where people come to live



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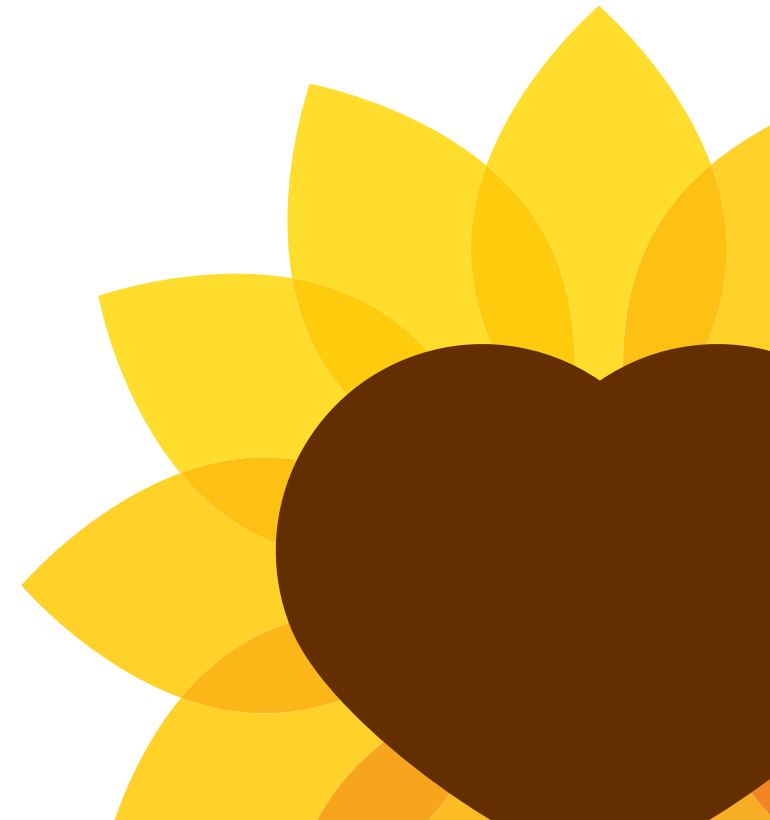


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# Oral Hygiene Advice



## Introduction

Whilst you are unwell, you are more likely than usual to suffer from problems with your mouth. This leaflet is designed to advise you on things you can do to prevent these problems and what you can do to help if they do occur.

## Taking care of your mouth

It is important and recommended that you:

- ♥ Brush your teeth twice a day using a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste and rinse with water or mouthwash.
- ♥ Rinse your mouth after meals and last thing at night with either warm water or saline solution.
- ♥ Check your mouth every day, removing dentures if worn and checking gums and tongue.
- ♥ Report any changes to your doctor or nurse.
- ♥ Ensure that you drink plenty of fluid.
- ♥ Dentures should be removed and soaked overnight. (Seek advice from your dentist if dentures don't fit properly due to weight loss).

## Taste disturbances

You may find that your taste has been altered by chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Hopefully, this is only a temporary problem, normally lasting for a few months. You may find it helpful to season food with herbs or spices to increase flavour.

## Dry mouth

A dry mouth may be helped by having cold unsweetened drinks, frequently sipping fluid or sucking on ice cubes, or frozen fruit juices. Chewing sugar free gum, boiled sweets, mints, pastilles or pineapple chunks may increase the production of saliva. Your doctor can prescribe artificial saliva, which some people find helpful.

## Sore mouth

Reducing the pain before eating may help. Soluble Paracetamol may be taken half an hour before meals (no more than 4 doses in 24 hours) or Difflam mouthwash may be used half an hour before meals. If neither of these is effective, your doctor can prescribe a local anaesthetic spray or lozenge for use before meals.

## Dry lips

Vaseline or lip balm can be applied to lips before and after eating unless on oxygen, in which case your nurse can advise you on the best product to use.

## Coated tongue

If you have a coated tongue, please ask your doctor or nurse to check in case you have an infection which needs to be treated. The tongue may be cleaned by brushing with a soft baby toothbrush and using an antiseptic mouthwash such as chlorhexidine. Pineapple chunks may help to clean the tongue but may not be useful if the mouth is painful. Allowing a quarter of an effervescent vitamin C tablet to dissolve on the tongue may also help to clean it.

## Thrush

Thrush (a fungal infection) in the mouth is a common problem, which causes white spots in the mouth and discomfort. Anti-thrush treatment comes as a yellow liquid (Nystatin) or a tablet (Fluconazole), which will be prescribed by your doctor. Dentures should be removed before taking Nystatin, then cleaned and replaced.