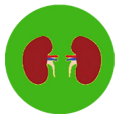


YOUR Oral Health & Organ Transplants

If you've had an organ transplant or plan to receive one, it's vital to meet with your dentist to maintain your oral health.



Transplant patients can be prone to oral health complications, especially within the first six months of surgery. Ask your dentist to be part of your overall care team to help prevent:

- **Infections:** With a weakened immune system, you're at greater risk of developing gum disease. If not treated properly, gum disease can progress to a serious gum infection called periodontitis. Other oral infections include yeast (thrush) and herpes (cold sores or fever blisters).
- **Enlarged gums:** Your gums may swell up and cover part of your teeth, making it hard to brush and floss. Food and bacteria can get trapped underneath, causing cavities and gingivitis.
- **Ulcers and canker sores:** Mouth ulcers are red, yellow or pale sores on the soft



tissues in your mouth. Ulcers typically appear inside your lips or cheeks, or on your tongue. Without treatment, these open sores can become infected.

- **Oral cancers:** Long-term use of anti-rejection drugs increases your risk of cancer of the tongue, salivary glands, lips, and throat. Have your dentist perform an oral cancer screening at every appointment.
- **Dry mouth:** Many medications cause dry mouth. And when your salivary glands aren't working well, they don't produce enough saliva to keep your mouth moist. Without saliva to help wash away plaque and bacteria, you're more

vulnerable to cavities and gum disease.

Minimizing any infections, including in your mouth, is an important part of your care before and after your transplant.

Team Care Recommended

Your dentist and physician may need to consult with one another to create an individual care plan for you.

If you're having a cleaning or procedure that can injure your gums, your dentist may prescribe antibiotics to take before your dental appointment to prevent infection. Bring a list of your current medications to your appointments, and tell your

(Continued next page)

Your Oral Health & Organ Transplants

dentist about any sore spots or bleeding you've noticed in your mouth. If your dentures don't fit any more, get them corrected. Loose dentures can rub your gums, causing sores and infection.

You may need to see your dentist more frequently ahead of or after your surgery.

Maintain Healthy Habits at Home

Maintain your oral care at home, too. Brush at least twice a day, especially after eating and before bedtime. Floss to clean the hidden pockets between your teeth, too. More tips:

- Brush gently using a toothbrush with ultra-soft bristles. If you're taking anti-coagulants, you may be prone to bleeding.
- Ask your dentist to recommend the right mouthwash for your home care routine.

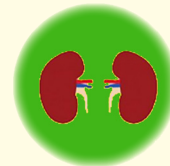
Did you know?

Tooth decay: More than 1 in 4 (26%) adults in the United States have untreated tooth decay.

Gum disease: Nearly half (46%) of all adults aged 30 years or older show signs of gum disease; severe gum disease affects about 9% of adults.

Tooth loss: Complete tooth loss among adults aged 65-74 years has steadily declined over time, but disparities exist among some population groups. If left untreated, cavities (tooth decay) and periodontal (gum) disease lead to tooth loss.

Chronic diseases: Having a chronic disease, such as arthritis, heart disease or stroke, diabetes, emphysema, hepatitis C, a liver condition, or being obese may increase an individual's risk of having missing teeth and poor oral health.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov)

- Limit sugary foods and drinks. And swish your mouth with water after eating or drinking to reduce harmful bacteria and plaque.
- Finally, if you have dry mouth, drink more water or chew sugar-free gum to help create saliva. You can also suck on sugar-free candy to stimulate saliva, too.

medications and diuretics, can cause oral health complications. Your oral health is part of your overall health, so do your best with both. 🦷

FYI: More information on the topic can be found at the TRICARE Dental Program's (TDP) Dental Health Center (uccitdp.com), the Academy of General Dentistry (agd.org), and the American Dental Association (ada.org).

Remember, many transplant-related medications, including antibiotics, anti-ulcer

Fact sheets in United Concordia's oral health series:



- Fluoride & Your Oral Health
- Oral Health for Kids with Special Needs
- Your Oral Health & Heart Disease
- Your Oral Health & Organ Transplants
- Oral Health: Infant to Teen
- Preventive Oral Care for Everyone
- Your Oral Health & Lupus
- Your Oral Health & Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Oral Health & Your Overall Wellness
- Your Oral Health & Diabetes
- Your Oral Health & Oral Cancer
- Your Oral Health & Pregnancy

Download fact sheets from the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) Dental Health Center: uccitdp.com