

# Health Hints

## Organ Transplants And Oral Health

(NAPSA)—If you are an organ transplant patient, you are at risk for mouth problems.

Your medical condition and side effects from your transplant medications can affect your oral health and complicate dental care. The National Institutes of Health offers these tips to help people stay well:

### Before Transplant

Have a dental checkup to make sure your mouth is as healthy as possible before your transplant procedure. Taking care of cavities, gum disease and any other mouth problems ahead of time can help prevent or reduce the side effects of transplant medicines.

### After Transplant

Anti-rejection medications suppress your immune system and make it easier for you to develop mouth infections like gum disease or thrush, and other problems such as gum overgrowth, dry mouth, mouth ulcers or tumors. Your dentist can help you manage any side effects of transplant medicines that may occur.

### Working With Doctors

It's important for your dentist and transplant doctor to speak with each other before dental treatment.

- Make sure your dentist knows that you are a transplant patient. Give your dentist the contact information for your transplant doctor.

- Bring a list of all your medications, including over-the-counter drugs, to every dental appointment. Tell your dentist if your medications have changed.

SPECIAL CARE SERIES

**NIDCR**  
National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

Improving the Nation's Oral Health • www.nidcr.nih.gov

### Organ Transplantation and Your Mouth

If you are an organ transplant patient, you are at risk for serious mouth problems. Your medical condition and side effects from your transplant medications can affect your oral health and complicate dental care. This fact sheet identifies problems you may encounter and explains how you can help keep your mouth healthy.

**PRE-TRANSPLANT DENTAL CHECK-UP** A dental check-up is an important part of your pre-transplant evaluation. Because some medications you take after transplant can cause problems in your mouth, you want your mouth to be as healthy as possible before your transplant procedure. Taking care of cavities, periodontal (gum) disease, and any other mouth problems ahead of time can help prevent or reduce the side effects of transplant medicines. Keeping your mouth clean and free of dental disease is important for your general health as well.

**POST-TRANSPLANT DENTAL CARE** Anti-rejection medications suppress your immune system and make it easier for you to develop infections and other problems in your mouth, including:

- Dry mouth—the "cotton mouth" feeling you get when you don't have enough saliva to keep your mouth moist. Dry mouth increases your risk for tooth decay.
- Mouth ulcers—sores in the soft lining of the mouth that can make chewing, speaking or swallowing painful.
- Infections—such as gum disease that can harm the tissues holding the teeth in place, or thrush—a fungus infection that appears as creamy white patches in the mouth.
- Gingival overgrowth—enlarged gums that cover part of the teeth, making brushing and flossing difficult and increasing the risk for bleeding and infection.
- Tumors—mouth cancers that occur in some transplant patients, especially those who have smoked.

Once your transplant has stabilized, your dentist can treat new dental disease and help you manage any side effects of transplant medications that may occur. All mouth problems should be treated.

**T**

## Organ transplant patients are urged to pay special attention to their oral health.

- Talk to your dentist about your general health. If you have diabetes or other health conditions, make sure your dentist knows. In the same way, talk to your transplant doctor about your oral health. Tell your doctor if you have mouth problems.

### Staying Healthy

Take an active role in keeping your mouth healthy after your transplant procedure—check your mouth every day for any changes and brush and floss daily. If you have any questions about brushing and flossing, particularly if your mouth is sore, ask your dentist or dental hygienist.

To view or order a free fact sheet about organ transplantation and your mouth, visit <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/OrderPublications>.