

## DENTAL CARE

### Importance of dental care before treatment

#### You will need to see a dentist before starting radiation therapy.

Call to schedule a pretreatment consultation with your dentist as soon as possible. It is important to have an evaluation and any necessary treatment *before* starting radiation therapy.

Dental services are currently provided under the Medi-Cal Program. You may have access to Denti-Cal with this program.

For more information, call 800-322-6384 or visit the website <http://www.denti-cal.ca.gov>

#### Are you currently managed by Medi-Cal?

You may call Health Care Options at 800-430-4263 to verify your plan.

If you have *Health Net*, call 877-550-3868

If you have *LIBERTY*, call 877-550-3875



#### Why is this important?

Patients receiving radiation therapy to the head and neck are at risk for developing oral complications. Because of the risk of osteonecrosis in irradiated fields, oral surgery should be performed before radiation treatment regimen.

#### *Before Head and Neck Radiation Therapy*

1. Conduct a pretreatment oral health examination and prophylaxis.
2. Schedule dental treatment in consultation with the radiation oncologist. The radiation oncologist can also help determine what treatment is urgent or can wait.
3. Consider extracting teeth in the proposed radiation field that may be a problem in the future.
4. Prevent tooth demineralization and radiation caries:
  - a. Fabricate custom gel-applicator trays for the patient.
  - b. Prescribe a 1.1% neutral pH sodium fluoride gel or a 0.4% stannous, unflavored fluoride gel (not fluoride rinses).
  - c. Use a neutral fluoride for patients with porcelain crowns or resin or glass ionomer restorations.
  - d. Be sure that the trays cover all tooth structures without irritating the gingival or mucosal tissues.
  - e. Instruct the patient in home application of fluoride gel. Several days before radiation therapy begins, the patient should start a daily 10-minute application.
  - f. Have patients brush with a fluoride gel if using trays is difficult.
5. Allow at least 14 days of healing for any oral surgical procedures prior to radiation therapy starting.

If needed, conduct prosthetic surgery before treatment, since elective surgical procedures are contraindicated on irradiated bone.