



Alcohol Use and Oral Health Fact Sheet

FOR PROVIDERS

OCTOBER 2017

The Challenge...

Patients who drink alcohol regularly may experience specific problems related to their oral health and hygiene.

What you need to know...

- Patients who drink high amounts of alcohol daily may brush less effectively than those who don't drink alcohol, despite reporting similar brushing frequency. Also, impaired motor activity can affect their ability to perform basic dental hygiene adequately.¹
- Alcohol is also the most common cause of sialadenosis of the parotid gland. This condition causes swelling of the parotid gland and decreased secretion of saliva.²
- Poor nutrient intake and absorption combined with decreased salivary excretion frequently can lead to glossitis, angular cheilitis, candida infection, oral ulceration, and acute necrotizing ulcerative gingivitis (ANUG).²
- A decreased immune response combined with a nutritionally poor diet, poor oral hygiene, decreased salivary flow, and a high incidence of smoking among these patients, provides an environment conducive to rapid progression of periodontal disease, dental caries and increased risk of oral thoracic cancers.²
- High consumption of alcohol may damage the liver and bone marrow resulting in excessive bleeding during dental treatment. If excessive bleeding is observed, treatment should be stopped and referral for medical evaluation and necessary blood coagulation tests should be requested before treatment progresses.³
- Drugs used in dentistry that are metabolized in the liver include amide local anesthetics and benzodiazepines. These drugs can metabolize faster, as compared to a routine patient, and can have a reduced effect in the alcohol abusive patient. Dental anesthetics may not work as well at the injection site and may be carried into the bloodstream more rapidly. Repeated doses may need to be reduced, or the interval between doses prolonged, to prevent excessive blood levels.³

Glossitis – tongue inflammation

Angular cheilitis – corners of the mouth chronically inflamed and cracked

Candida – yeast infection

Oral Ulceration – painful round or oval sores

Acute Necrotizing Ulcerative Gingivitis – infection of the gums that causes ulcers, swelling, and dead tissue in the mouth

Ways You Can Help...

Recommend:

- Brushing thoroughly two times daily with a fluoridated toothpaste.
- Rinse mouth with non-alcoholic mouth rinse.
- Have an oral examination and cleaning by a dental professional at least two times per year.
- Regular oral exams that include a periodontal evaluation and oral cancer screenings to detect any signs of suspicious lesions.³



Footnotes:

1. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2760312/>
2. <http://www.jcda.ca/article/b114>
3. <https://www.dentalcare.com/en-us/professional-education/ce-courses>

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