



MEDICALLY NECESSARY DENTAL CARE IS ESSENTIAL FOR OLDER ADULTS RECEIVING CANCER TREATMENT

More than two thirds of all new cancers are diagnosed among adults aged 60+ years.

Oral health problems at the time of diagnosis and during treatment or recovery escalate the risk for treatment side effects and complications like mucositis and sepsis that increase costs, compromise outcomes, and negatively affect quality of life.

The Consortium for Medically Necessary Oral Health Coverage supports inclusion of dental care for Medicare enrollees with cancer and related immunosuppression.



What are common oral health complications of cancer treatment?

- Chemotherapy-related immunosuppression is associated with serious oral and systemic side effects including mucositis, sepsis, oral bleeding, candidiasis, and salivary changes.
- Radiation therapy tissue damage often is permanent and puts patients at risk for oral complications including xerostomia, mucositis, trismus, dysphagia/dysgeusia, severe tooth decay, and medication-related osteonecrosis of the jaw (MRONJ).
- High dose bisphosphonates used to treat breast cancer, bone metastases and antiangiogenic therapies used to treat multiple myeloma may be associated with MRONJ.

How much do the side effects of cancer treatment cost per patient?

- **\$5,000-\$30,000:** cost of immunosuppression-related oral mucositis among radiation therapy patients.
- **\$70,000:** cost of immunosuppression-related mucositis-related hospitalization among stem cell transplants.
- **\$35,000- \$70,000:** cost of conservative management of patients suffering MRONJ.

Treatment of oral health problems before, during, and following cancer treatment can prevent complications, improve outcomes, and reduce cost.