

APRIL 2017

Mouth care critical during chemo

During chemotherapy, it is important to take good care of your child's mouth. Many types of chemo medicines can cause mouth problems, such as painful sores. These mouth sores can increase your child's risk of getting a blood stream infection.

Mouth sores are an easy way for germs to get into your child's body. Serious infection can occur because cancer treatment can weaken your child's immune system. A regular mouth care routine is critical if your

child gets chemo.

A mouth care routine can include:

- Brushing teeth,
- Rinsing the mouth,
- Using lip balm, and
- Getting "cold therapy" with certain chemotherapies to help prevent mouth sores.

Your child's nurse can talk to you about the details. Also ask for a copy of the new handout, "Do You Know... Mouth Care Routine."

Why prevent mouth sores?

The sores can cause many problems:

- Pain – From mild to severe
- Problems eating, drinking and swallowing, which can lead to poor nutrition
- Higher risk of getting an infection
- More healing time – Waiting for mouth sores to heal can lengthen your child's hospital stay

Checking for mouth sores

During chemo treatment, the St. Jude staff will check your child's mouth for sores every day. Please tell the staff right away if your child has any of these signs:

- Blisters, sores or white patches in the mouth
- Blisters on the lips
- Pain on the lips or in the mouth, including a sore throat
- Upset stomach, cramps or diarrhea
- Bleeding from the gums
- Trouble swallowing, eating or drinking
- Extra fluid in the mouth or throat
- A fever of 100.4 degrees F (38 degrees C) or higher

If your child gets mouth sores, the St. Jude staff will treat them and any other problems caused by the mouth sores. The handout "Do You Know... Mouth Care Routine" offers details about how you can help. Also, St. Jude dietitians created a handout to help you know what the best foods and drinks are for a sore mouth. It is called "Do You Know... Sore Mouth Diet."

Talk to your child's doctor or nurse if you have questions or concerns about mouth sores.

Focusing on mental health month

Mental health plays a vital role in how well children cope with illness and treatment. It impacts quality of life and children's overall sense of hope and well-being as they tackle all the challenges of being a St. Jude patient. Good mental health can lead to:

- better pain management,
- healthier sleep and appetite, and
- fewer problems coping with procedures, side effects and routine changes.

The Psychology Department staff helps patients work toward reaching their full health potential and the best possible quality of life. The staff provides a high standard of patient care and leads creative new clinical research for improving outcomes for patients and families.

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week is April 17–21. You can help the Psychology staff celebrate this year's theme "Angry Birds and the Island of Emotions" by attending these exciting events for patients and families:

Monday, April 17

Watch "The Angry Birds Movie"
Kay Kafe Corner
9:30–11 a.m.

Wednesday, April 19

Patients and siblings are invited to join Psychology staff members at the Kay Kafe Corner for Angry Birds arts and craft activities. These include making masks, creating cardboard Angry Birds, and coloring.

Kay Kafe Corner

11 a.m.–2 p.m.

Thursday, April 20

Psychology staff will host an information table outside the Kay Kafe, highlighting current clinical and research activities. The staff will also answer questions you might have about the services offered to patients and families through the Psychology Department.

Kay Kafe Lobby (window area)

11 a.m.–2 p.m.

Friday, April 21

A panel of patients and parents will discuss their personal journeys at St. Jude, including the role that good mental health played in their coping and adjusting to illness. This event is open to patients, patient families and staff members. Lunch will be served beginning at 11:45 a.m.

St. Jude Auditorium

Noon–1 p.m.

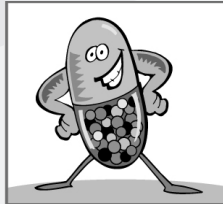
Teen Formal planned for April

The St. Jude Child Life staff is excited to host the 2017 Teen Formal Thursday, April 13, from 5:30–8:30 p.m. This year's theme is Rock & Soul. The event will include world-class music entertainment from a nationally-known DJ, amazing food, photos, a limo ride and prizes, as well as a take-home gift for each guest.

The teen formal is open to patients and one guest each. All patients and guests attending must be between the ages of 15 and 19 and enrolled in school. Formal invitations have already been mailed to active St. Jude patients in that age range.

The 2017 Teen Formal will be held in the Domino's Event Center located on the St. Jude campus. To learn more about the teen formal, talk to your Child Life specialist.





Talking about Medicines

Precautions for using fentanyl patches

By Shane Cross, PharmD, Pharmaceutical Services

At some point in your child's treatment, pain medicine might be needed. Fentanyl patches are one way to give pain medicine through the skin over time. Each patch helps relieve pain for three days.

The US Food and Drug Administration is stressing special precautions for fentanyl patches. Being exposed to fentanyl by accident can be harmful and even lead to death. Young children are at greatest risk because they are mobile and curious. Be sure to follow these guidelines to protect everyone from fentanyl patch dangers:

- Keep used and unused patches out of the reach of children.
- As soon as your child no longer needs fentanyl patches, throw away any patches that are left over. Remove the leftover patches from their protective pouches. Remove the protective liners and fold the patches in half, so the sticky sides stick to themselves. Flush them down the toilet. Do not flush the pouch and liner; throw them away in the trash.
- If anyone touches the gel on a loose patch, wash the skin right away with running water. Replace any loose patch using the guidelines in "Do You Know... About Fentanyl Patches."
- When it is time to replace a patch, remove the old patch and try not to touch the gel. Fold the used patch in half so the sticky side sticks to itself, and then flush it down the toilet. Wash hands well after handling the patch.
- The patch will release more medicine if it gets too warm, which could lead to an overdose. Your child may take a bath or shower while wearing a fentanyl patch, but avoid very warm or hot water. Your child should avoid hot tubs while wearing a fentanyl patch.

If you have questions about fentanyl patches or any of your child's medicines, talk to the doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

New machines in Assessment and Triage

Assessment and Triage recently received new vital sign machines and scales. These new, advanced devices can send the information directly to your child's medical record chart. The hope is that this new process will decrease errors in writing down the information, and in turn cut down on medicine dosing errors. Medicine doses are often based partially on your child's weight.

With the new machines, patients will have to remove their shoes **every time** they are weighed. In the past if the family knew the weight of the

shoes they just told the nurse, and the nurse would calculate the difference. That won't be possible with these new machines, because the weight will transfer directly to the patient chart, electronically.

"This might be an inconvenience for some families, but we believe it will improve medicine dosing safety for their children," said Ambulatory Care Unit Nurse Manager Tricia Mamer, RN, BSN.

If you have questions about this change, please speak with an Assessment and Triage nurse.

St. Jude Parents is published on the first of each month by Family-Centered Care Services and Biomedical Communications. Your questions and comments are important to us. **We want to print advice and tips from St. Jude parents to other St. Jude parents.**

To share your ideas or to receive this newsletter by email, please call or email Alicia Huettel, RN, MSN, at 901-595-5453 (parents_newsletter@stjude.org) or Lois Young (lois.young@stjude.org). To subscribe to an online version of this newsletter or to learn more about *St. Jude Parents*, visit www.stjude.org/parents-newsletter. St. Jude is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-866-278-5833 (TTY: 1-901-595-1040).

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St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

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