



Nutrition Counseling

When Bob developed mucositis, or mouth sores after his first chemotherapy, he was barely able to eat or drink for days and eventually had to be admitted to the hospital for dehydration. Fortunately, the sores went away within a week and he was able to eat and drink normally again. However, his second cycle of chemotherapy was delayed a week due to the hospitalization.

At his next visit his nurse suggested he meet with the nutrition counselor. The Registered Dietitian talked to him about the symptoms he had experienced during his first cycle. She told him that although his mouth sores would return with each treatment, she could provide him with some tips to keep him out of the hospital and his treatments on time. Bob knew that the mouth sores were painful, but he did not know that if they became infected it could be dangerous. She stressed that to decrease delays and hospitalizations it was important for Bob to stay hydrated and maintain his weight during treatment. The nutrition counselor encouraged him to practice good oral care, suggesting he use a soft toothbrush and trade his usual mouthwash for an alcoholic-free mouthwash. She also encouraged Bob to ask his doctor about “magic mouthwash” (a mixture containing Lidocaine that is swished and swallowed). She recommended that he use this 10-15 minutes before eating to numb the area.

Other suggestions included choosing bland foods that would not irritate the sores. She provided him with protein powders and nutrition supplements to try, as well as recommendations for soft foods that were both high in calories and protein. She encouraged him to try the protein powder in foods like mashed potatoes, applesauce, or oatmeal which may be easier to eat, but don't offer many calories or protein. The nutrition counselor provided him with information about where he could purchase the supplements he liked. She also provided him with her contact information and encouraged him to call with any nutrition related questions. The next cycle he had a fridge full of yogurt and his cabinets filled with ready to eat snacks. Although he was not looking forward to experiencing the mouth sores again, he felt confident that this cycle he would be able to stay hydrated, nourished and out of the hospital.

For more information about nutrition services at the Joan Karnell Cancer Center, please contact Debra DeMille MS, RD, CSO, at 215.829.6560 or Carly Roop, RD, at 215.829.6737.