



# Osteoradionecrosis

The health of your bones after radiotherapy

## Background

Osteoradionecrosis is a rare problem of bone healing that affects a small number of individuals who have received radiotherapy in high doses, particularly to the jaw. It usually occurs after dental procedures and leads to mouth pain and swelling.

## Who is at risk?

Individuals who have received a high dose (40Gy) or higher of radiation to the jaw are at risk. This includes radiation to the following areas:

- head/brain
- nasopharynx (nose and upper mouth)
- mouth and throat
- neck and area above the collar bones

## How is osteoradionecrosis diagnosed?

By examination, x-ray and MRI scan.

## How is osteoradionecrosis treated?

- painkillers – to reduce pain
- antibiotics – to treat any infection
- hyperbaric oxygen – oxygen delivered in a pressurised chamber may occasionally be used to encourage healing

## What can I do?

If you have had radiation to your jaw:

- keep **good care of your teeth and gums**
- **see a dentist regularly** – every six months, make sure they know you had radiation treatment

## Where can I find more information?

The (American) Oral Cancer Foundation has further information about osteoradionecrosis

[www.oralcancerfoundation.org/complications/osteoradionecrosis.php](http://www.oralcancerfoundation.org/complications/osteoradionecrosis.php)

[www.aftercure.org](http://www.aftercure.org)

The full range of factsheets for childhood and teenage cancer survivors are available on the CCLG and Aftercure websites in conjunction with CCLG's booklet entitled 'Aftercure: A guide for teenage and young adult survivors of childhood cancer'.

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