



# Crossing the Finish Line!



CANCER PREVENTION & RESEARCH  
INSTITUTE OF TEXAS

## TOPICS

# Welcome to Week 6

Click the yellow “Next” button [NEXT ►](#) above if you want to go through the entire Week 6 step by step, or click on a button below to jump directly to a topic of interest.

**Watch this video of Dr. Eileen Shinn, Assistant Professor, MD Anderson Cancer Center, as she introduces the topics this week.**

[Congratulations!](#)[Special Section: Information for Caregivers](#)[Fatigue](#)[Unrealistic Expectations](#)[Doubt](#)[Setting Goals for Yourself](#)[Patient Stories and Tips to Encourage You](#)

# Congratulations!

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**You are in your last week of treatment. Congratulations!**

CONGRATULATIONS!

# You are in your last week of treatment. Congratulations!

**This is a week** of celebration that you have finished your final radiation treatment.

**Be very proud** of yourself for sticking to your treatment and kicking your cancer! Many people look forward to their last day of treatment. Feel free to invite your family and friends to be there, either in person or in spirit, in support of your exit from your battle with your cancer and your entrance to the next chapter of your life.



CONGRATULATIONS!

# You are in your last week of treatment. Congratulations!

**After you finish** your radiation, you will be entering another phase of this process: Recovery from radiation.

**In the following weeks**, it is very important that you follow your doctor's orders so you can heal your body and start feeling better. Now that treatment will be over, you may feel the full effects of the radiation, including loss of taste, dry mouth, mucositis, sores on your neck, or just feeling really weak.

**It can be** very difficult to do your exercises when you feel low. To help with that, here are some specific strategies for dealing with the problems you may face this week.



# Special Section: Information for Caregivers

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The coming weeks may still be very difficult. [Click here to read about how to cope.](#)

SPECIAL SECTION: INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

# Information for Caregivers

**The coming weeks** may still be very difficult. Some patients report that they feel the side effects of radiation most severely in the weeks after radiation ends. Here are a few tips to help you prepare to take care of your loved one at home.

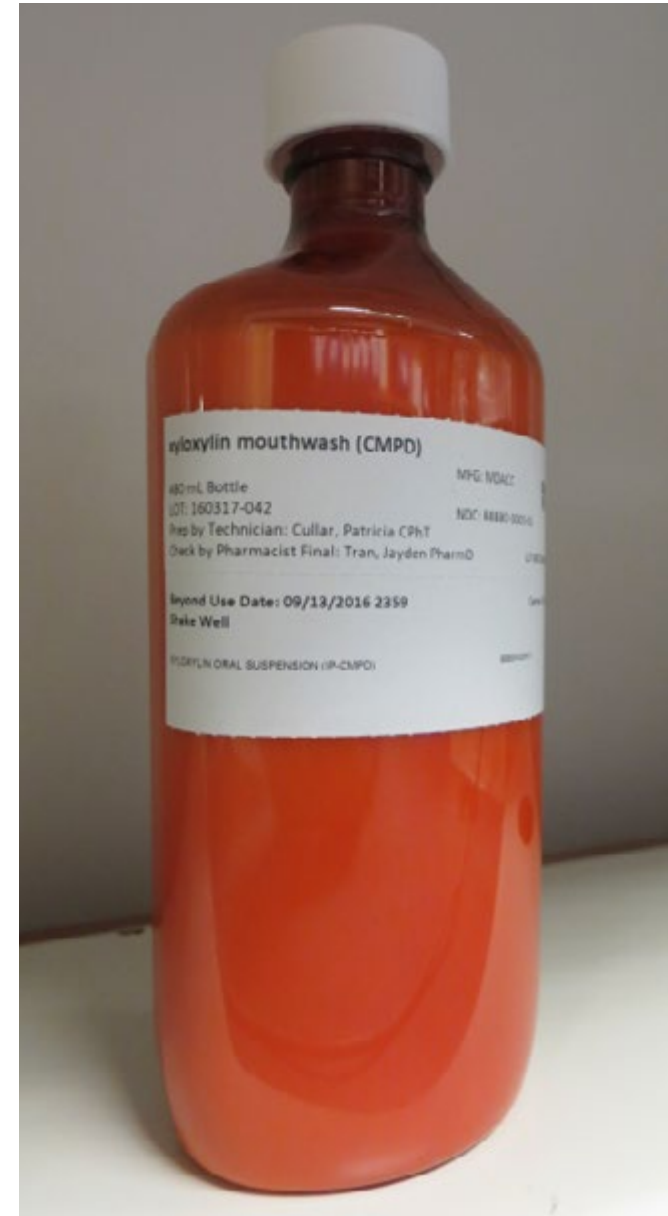


## SPECIAL SECTION: INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

# Taking Care of the Patient

**Make sure** you have a way to get pain medication refills.

**As a precaution,** you may want to schedule a follow-up for the patient with his or her home family practitioner/internist for blood work and weight loss management for one to two weeks after the end of radiation.



SPECIAL SECTION: INFORMATION FOR CAREGIVERS

# Taking Care of Yourself

**Remember** to take care of yourself not just your loved one.

**Eat regular** healthy meals, sleep well, and find time for fun or relaxing activities.

**Don't be afraid** to ask friends or family for help. Remember, you will be of no use to your loved one if you are ill or worn out.



# Fatigue

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**[Click here to learn about handling fatigue.](#)**

## FATIGUE

# Fatigue

**When you come home**, take the time to rest and get plenty of sleep.

**Take advantage** of this time and chill out. It is perfectly okay to sleep a lot this week.



# Unrealistic Expectations

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[Click here for more.](#)

## UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

# Unrealistic Expectations

**Celebrate the fact** you've made it through radiation. You must keep reminding yourself this week that you may not feel 100% right now, but this is normal.

**Many patients** are upset when they finish treatment, realizing they may not be able to do everything they were doing before treatment, like playing basketball or eating a juicy steak.

**Give yourself** and your body some time and you will be back in action.



# Doubt

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**[Click here to learn about dealing with doubt.](#)**

## DOUBT

# Doubt

**Remember** how well you've done throughout this process and the dedication you've shown. Try to think of all the accomplishments you have achieved in your lifetime and remember that this is yet another one to be very proud of.

**You can and you WILL do this!**



# Setting Goals for Yourself

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[Click here to read about setting goals for yourself.](#)

## SETTING GOALS FOR YOURSELF

# Setting Goals for Yourself

**Another focus point** for this week and the weeks to follow is to think about what you want to do for the rest of your life. Your life is there, just waiting for you to come and take it back!

**Many past patients** have told us that the thing they wanted so badly was to have their normal lives back. They were looking forward to simple things like eating a hamburger again, going hunting with their buddies, getting out and going shopping, gardening, maybe fixing up an old car, or playing with their grandchildren.

**Whatever loss** of function/ability you have, don't worry. You will be able to live your life again, and this phase of your life will someday be a distant memory. What are some things that you are looking forward to doing again - places you'd like to travel, a new hobby perhaps? Remember, you've come so far, and you are doing great!



## SETTING GOALS FOR YOURSELF

# Set Some Goals

**Take a minute** and jot down a few goals. Your goals can be places you'd like to visit, people you'd like to see, new hobbies, foods you'd like to eat again, or whatever you are looking forward to.

## Your Goals

1.

2.

3.

# What do I do now?

**Drink 1 gallon** of water (16 cups) spaced out throughout the day, every day. Do your exercises and swallow by mouth as much as possible every day.

**Take your temperature** every day. **A temperature of 101°Fahrenheit or higher is a sign of infection, go DIRECTLY to the EMERGENCY ROOM or call the clinic.**

**See your speech** pathologist this week.

**Make sure to apply** creams or sunscreen recommended or prescribed by your physician.

**Take senna** (or other laxative as directed by your doctor) to help with bowel management.

**If you are having** new problems with eating or with the exercises, call the office at (817) 920-0484.



# Patient Stories and Tips to Encourage You

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[Click here to read stories and tips from other patients.](#)

## PATIENT STORIES AND TIPS TO ENCOURAGE YOU

## Gary's Story

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“My treatment wasn’t as bad as other cancer patients I’ve talked with, not even close. But I did get very bad mucositis. At one point I was hospitalized from dehydration. I literally couldn’t get air into my mouth, let alone swallow water. It was challenging.

I did do my swallowing exercises. Maybe not four every day, but I did them at least once a day, twice a day. I just wanted my long-term future to be the best it could be. That was my motivation. That and I made a promise that I would do them.

It’s hard to gauge whether the swallowing exercises helped me. All I know is that I can swallow virtually everything now, no limitations. The other day, I ordered a hamburger and brought it home. When

I unwrapped it, it looked huge, because they had accidentally put in a double burger instead of a single. I couldn’t have done it until recently, but I could fit the burger into my mouth without cutting it in half and I finished the whole thing.

I don’t know if I can swallow now because of the exercises, or because of people praying for me, or because of a positive spirit, or having great support, or maybe all of those things together, but I do know that I can do virtually anything I could do before I got cancer. Swallowing isn’t as easy as it used to be, it’s not a walk in the park. I have dry mouth still, but there’s nothing I can’t do.

I’m six months past treatment now and everything is great. When I come in for



my follow-ups, my doctors are ecstatic and say that my scan looks pristine. I don’t worry so much about the cancer coming back or think about what I’ve been through, I have so much to do and I’m ready to get on with my life.”

PATIENT STORIES AND TIPS TO ENCOURAGE YOU

# Patient Story

## Difficult Journey Video

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“Like I stated earlier, this is not an easy experience but it’s an experience that you must do. You must make your mind up that this will come to an end. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, but getting there may be a rough road.

It’s all about survival so you want to get the attitude that you can and you will make it through the treatments for any type of head and neck cancer you might have. I don’t really know what else I need to advise you other than hang in there you’ll make it.”

Former Patient



PATIENT STORIES AND TIPS TO ENCOURAGE YOU

## Patient Quotes

“I’m an ex-army ranger, a pretty tough guy. I thought to myself, “I will sail through this,’ but sailing is for sailors”

“Look back on what got you through the other times. I’m not a quitter.”

“I’m going to try to have as normal life as possible.”

“Use independence as a motivator.”

“It’s a hell of a ride, but I just rode the rollercoaster.”

“Concentrate on finding your goal, then concentrate on reaching it.”

“Set exciting personal goals. You will live longer.”

“I wouldn’t miss life for anything!”

Former Patient



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# Index of Topics with Week Numbers

## A letter to head and neck patients (week 1)

### Altered Taste/Dysgeusia

- Strategies to help you (week 3)

## A note to caregivers (weeks 7 and 9)

### Bowel management

- Do not take Metamucil or Citrucel! (week 3)
- What to do if you're constipated (weeks 3, 4, and 7)
- Summary of constipation management (week 7)

### Caring for your skin

- Sunscreen products (weeks 1 and 2)

## Checking for trismus (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

## Constipation management (week 8)

## Communication at home (week 2)

## Congratulations! (week 6)

## Create Eat/ Don't Eat Lists (week 3)

## Dealing with fatigue and nausea (week 7)

## Dehydration (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

### Dental care

- Strategies for dental care (week 2)

## Doubt (week 6)

## Fatigue (weeks 5, 6, 8, and 9)

### Feeding tube

- Help (week 1)
- Introduction (week 1)

## Feeding tube weaning (week 8)

## Fighting with your caregiver (week 2)

## General advice from patients (week 3)

## How to throw up through your feeding tube (week 5)

## Hydration (week 1)

## Importance of hydration (week 1)

## Improving your oral intake (week 3)

- Foods you may enjoy
- Products to increase calorie intake

## Information for caregivers (week 5)

## Instructional videos for swallowing and trismus exercises (week 1)

## Keep swallowing by mouth (week 4)

## Low acid diet (week 1)

## Making a commitment to do your swallowing and trismus exercises (week 1)

## Managing your energy (week 1)

## Mini-relaxation exercise for both patients and caregivers (week 5)

## Mucositis (week 9)

### Nausea

- Commonly prescribed anti-nausea medications (weeks 3 and 5)
- General information about nausea (week 9)
- Thick saliva can cause nausea (week 5)
- Try to determine what is causing nausea (weeks 3 and 5)

## Nutrition (week 1)

## Pain/dryness in radiated skin

- Products for dry and radiated skin (week 3 and 7)
- Should I use cream on my neck before radiation? (week 3)

## Pain (week 5)

## Pain and medicine side effects (week 8)

## Pain from radiation burn (week 9)

## Pain management (week 3)

### Patient Stories

- Difficult journey ahead (week 6)
- Difficulty swallowing due to pain and mucus (week 9)
- Frank's story (week 7)
- Gary's story (week 6)
- Jake's story (week 9)
- John's story (week 3)
- Katy's story (week 4)
- Macho story (week 9)
- Maria's story (week 5)
- Michael's story (week 1)
- Steve's story (week 2)
- Trismus (week 1)
- Unexpected battle (week 7)
- Wearing the mask (week 1)
- You Can't Look Back, You Can't Change What's Been (week 8 and week 10)

### Patient Quotes/Tips

- Advice to caregivers (week 8)

## INDEX

# Index of Topics with Week Numbers

- Attitude (week 8)
- Exercises (week 1)
- Fatigue (week 8)
- Food (week 4)
- General tips (weeks 2, 4, 6, 7, and 9)
- Mouth care (week 3)
- Mucositis (week 3)
- Mucus (week 3)
- Nausea (week 8)
- Pain (week 8)
- Skin care (week 3)

## Preventing constipation

- Do not take Metamucil or Citrucel! (week 2)
- Managing constipation (week 2)
- Medications that cause constipation (weeks 2 and 4)
- Products to combat constipation (weeks 2, 4, and 7)
- Strategies to combat constipation (weeks, 2 and 4)

## Program Wrap-Up: Managing your health

- Congratulations to caregivers! (week 10)
- Congratulations to patients! (week 10)

## Pureed diet

- Foods to avoid on a pureed diet (week 4)
- How to make pureed food (week 4)

## Recipes

- All recipes (week 4)

## Reminder: 6-Month follow up (week 9)

## Resources (week 4)

## Setting goals for yourself (week 6)

### Soft diet (week 4)

- Foods to avoid on a soft diet (week 4)

### Some reminders as you recover at home (week 7)

### Stress relief for patients and caregivers

- A note to caregivers (week 8)
- Breathing Awareness (weeks 2 and 8)
- Diaphragmatic Breathing (weeks 2 and 8)
- Guided Imagery (weeks 2 and 8)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (weeks 2 and 8)
- Rules for Effective Imagery (weeks 2 and 8)

### Swallowing exercises (week 1 and swallowing and trismus exercises PDF)

### Taking care of your skin during treatment (week 2)

### Taking medications through a feeding tube (week 5)

- Taking liquid medication through a feeding tube (week 5)
- Taking pills through a feeding tube (week 5)

### Tell us what you ate (weeks 7 and 9)

### The importance of swallowing exercises (weeks 1 and 2)

### The importance of trismus exercises (weeks 1 and 2)

### Thick saliva and dry mouth (week 2)

- Strategies to fight thick saliva

## Thrush (Candida) vs. Mucositis (weeks 3 and 5)

### Tips and products for mucositis

- Explanation of mucositis (week 3)
- Products for mucositis (weeks 3 and 7)
- Strategies to combat mucositis (week 3 and 7)

### Tips and products for thrush

- Explanation of thrush (week 3)
- Medications to treat thrush (week 3)
- Strategies to combat thrush (week 3)

### Tips for dry mouth

- Explanation of dry mouth (week 3)
- Products for dry mouth (weeks 3 and 7)
- Strategies to combat dry mouth (week 3)
- Tips for dry mouth (week 9)

### Tips for improving oral intake (week 4)

### Track your fluid intake (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

### Track your weight (week 3)

### Trismus exercise (week 1 and swallowing and trismus exercises PDF)

### Unrealistic expectations (week 6)

### Quote from a former patient (week 10)

### What do I do now? (weeks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

### When is my taste coming back? (week 9)

### You can do it! (week 1)

### Your progress (week 9)

- Don't stop your exercises now!