Complications of the Mouth and Throat

Most cancers of the head and neck are treated with surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and targeted drug therapy, either alone or in combination, all of which may cause side effects.

The mouth is host to more than 500 species of bacteria that help prevent infection by pathogenic organisms. Chemotherapy and radiation not only upset this microenvironment but can also damage the cells that line the mouth and affect saliva production.

Dry mouth can make it difficult to eat, talk and swallow. It can also lead to tooth decay and gum disease.

Damage to the lining of the mouth can result in sores, inflammation and infection.

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Treatment for throat cancer will sometimes cause complications, such as difficulty chewing, swallowing, talking and breathing, as well as changes to the thyroid, skin and muscles.