

Dry Mouth Patient Information Leaflet

DRY MOUTH IS NOT A NORMAL PART OF AGING.

What is dry mouth?

- There is not enough saliva (spit) to keep your mouth wet.

Symptoms of dry mouth:

- Trouble with chewing, swallowing, tasting or speaking
- A burning feeling in the mouth
- Dry feeling in throat, and/or dry tongue
- Mouth sores and/or mouth infection
- Chapped lips that won't heal
- Suddenly having lots of new cavities

Why do people need saliva?

- Makes chewing and swallowing possible
- Helps with food digestion
- Protects teeth from decay
- Dilutes and washes food off the teeth
- Helps to control bacteria and fungi in the mouth

What causes dry mouth?

- Prescription medicines (anti-depressants, anti-hypertensives, decongestants, etc.)
- Dehydration (not drinking enough water and fluids)
- Consuming food or drinks that contain caffeine, alcohol or salt
- Trauma or infection of the salivary glands
- Emotional or anxiety states
- Sjogren's syndrome, Diabetes mellitus, viral infections
- Curative radiation which may affect the salivary glands

Problems with reduced saliva:

- Higher risk of fungal infections (Candida albicans)
- Dental problems: cavities, gum disease, halitosis (bad breath)
- Poor nutrition
- Sleep disturbance
- Problems with speaking
- Social problems affecting quality of life
- Difficulty swallowing medicine in capsule or tablet form

What can people do about dry mouth?

- Discuss your medications with your physician: sometimes a prescription can be changed to another brand of medicine without this side-effect

Try to keep your mouth moist with:

- frequent sips of water
- chewing sugarless gum
- sucking sugarless mints
- water-based lip moisturizers (Blistex, K-Y jelly)

Maintain good oral hygiene:

- gently and thoroughly brush teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- floss teeth every day
- visit your dentist for routine check-ups

Limit or avoid:

- tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, salt (all of which have a drying effect)
- petroleum-based lip products (Vaseline, Chapstik, Lypsol)
- sticky and sugary food (or immediately brush after eating)

Ask your dentist about:

- preventing cavities if saliva is low (e.g. fluoride trays for daily use at home)

Ask your dentist and / or pharmacist about:

- dry mouth products (e.g. Biotene)
- prescription medications to help ease dry mouth discomfort