

PATIENT'S PAGE



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What you need to know about dry mouth...

- Dry mouth is the condition of not having enough saliva, or spit, to keep your mouth wet.
- Dry mouth is also known as xerostomia.
- Everyone has experienced dry mouth.
- Common conditions can cause dry mouth, such as stress or feeling upset or nervous. But experiencing frequent dry mouth, in addition to general discomfort, can lead to serious health problems.
- Dry mouth can:
 - cause difficulties in tasting, chewing, swallowing, and speaking
 - increase your chance of developing dental decay and other infections in the mouth
 - be a sign of certain diseases and conditions
 - be caused by certain medications or medical treatments*
 - irritate the soft tissues in the mouth, which can make them inflamed and more susceptible to infection.

*Dry mouth is a potential side effect of numerous medications (prescribed and over-the-counter). Among them are antihistamines, decongestants, painkillers, high blood pressure medications, muscle relaxants, drugs for urinary incontinence, Parkinson's disease medications, antidepressants, and many others.

Symptoms of dry mouth include:

- a sticky, dry feeling in the mouth
- a burning feeling in the mouth
- cracked lips
- mouth sores
- trouble chewing, swallowing, tasting, or speaking
- a dry feeling in the throat or a sore throat
- a dry, tough tongue
- an infection in the mouth

Saliva is important because it:

- helps digest food
- prevents infection by controlling bacteria and fungi in the mouth
- makes it possible for you to chew and swallow
- protects teeth from decay

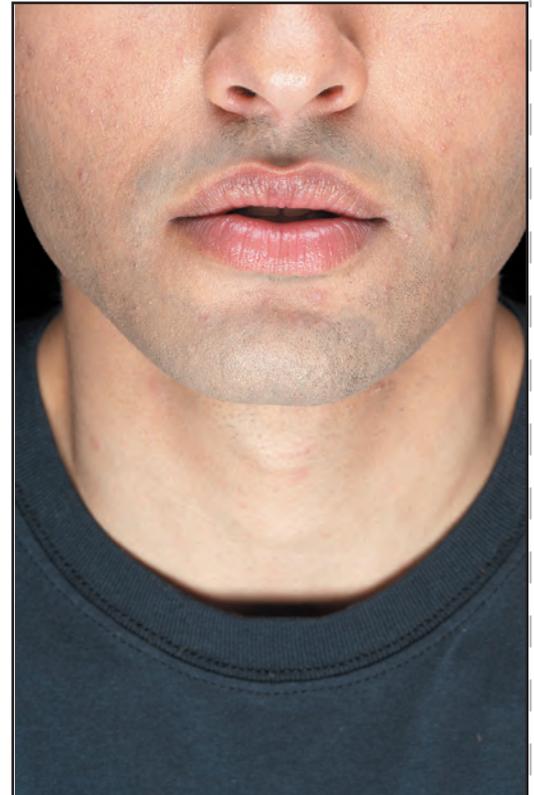
Treatment for dry mouth contributes to the prevention of:

- decay
- mouth irritation
- perio disease
- brittle teeth

Left untreated, dry mouth can damage your teeth. Without adequate saliva to lubricate your mouth, wash away food, and neutralize the acids produced by plaque, extensive decay can occur. Your dentist can recommend various methods to restore moisture.

Another reason to not smoke...

Cigarette smoke undermines protective properties of saliva. Once exposed to cigarette smoke, our normally healthy saliva not only loses its beneficial qualities but it turns traitor and actually aids in destroying the cells of the mouth and oral cavity. Cigarette smoke is not only damaging on its own, it can turn the body against itself. Cigarette smoke can destroy the antioxidants found in saliva, leaving behind a mixture of compounds that can accelerate the development of oropharyngeal cancer. [www.ada.org News Today June 2004]



Dry mouth is not a normal part of aging. So if you think you have dry mouth, see your dentist or physician - there are things you can do to get relief.

The average person creates around one liter of saliva a day. If saliva production is reduced, an individual's oral bacteria levels can increase ten times over normal levels.

