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XEROSTOMIA (DRY MOUTH)

THE IMPORTANCE OF SALIVA

The average healthy adult produces 3 pints of saliva on any given day. Saliva helps prevent tooth decay by washing away food and plaque from your teeth. Saliva limits bacterial growth and neutralizes damaging acids in your mouth.

As you get older, salivary production slows down. Hundreds of medications, including some over the counter drugs, produce dry mouth as a side effect.



Smoking or chewing tobacco can affect saliva production and aggravate dry mouth. Snoring and breathing with your mouth open also can dry oral tissues out.

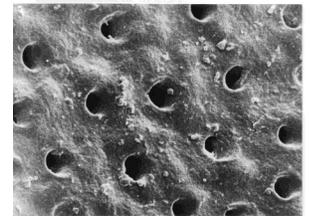
Dry mouth can be a consequence of certain other health conditions—or their treatments—such as, Cancer Therapy as radiation treatment and chemotherapy drugs change the nature and amount of saliva produced. The autoimmune disease Sjogren’s Syndrome, stroke, diabetes, anxiety disorders and depression all contribute to dry mouth.

What to look for:

1. Dry, painful oral tissues
2. Ropy saliva
3. Mouth odor
4. Sudden increase in dental caries



Root decay becomes a significant problem with dry mouth.



Teeth are porous and in 1 mm there are 30,000 dentinal tubules. Once penetrated by bacterial acids, root sensitivity and decay increase in frequency and severity.

Treatment

Dryness symptoms can be improved by

1. Frequent sips of water
2. Sugarfree gum , lozenges or sprays like Theraspray
3. Saliva Substitutes that are over the counter such as Oasis or Biotene.

Teeth can be remineralized by in office treatments such as Fluoride Varnishes and/or by the use of prescription level fluoride gels and pastes at home. Effective homecare techniques are also necessary for successful results.



Varnish applications remain on teeth for 4-6 hours before brushing off. Avoid hot food and drinks for 12 hours.



Custom trays hold fluoride in for 4 minutes then excess is spit out. No food or water for 30 minutes.

