



Medications and Dry Mouth

Dry mouth occurs when salivary glands in the mouth do not produce enough saliva. One of the main causes of dry mouth is medication, both prescription and over-the-counter. Among the more likely types of medications to cause problems are some of the drugs used to treat depression, neuropathy and anxiety, as well as simple antihistamines, decongestants and muscle relaxants. Chemotherapy patients frequently experience dry mouth throughout their entire treatment time. A high percentage of medications prescribed for mental illness are also known to cause this condition. Dry mouth is more than an annoying side effect - it is a health risk.

Dry Mouth Problems:

- Food particles break up and stick to soft tissue
- Food tastes bland
- More frequent biting of the inside of the cheek
- Back of the nasal area sticks together and makes breathing difficult
- Wake up every hour due to the tongue sticking to the roof of the mouth
- Increases cavities
- Increases canker sores and lip infections

Saliva Benefits:

- Lubricates inside of cheeks, lips and tongue
- Rinses away food debris
- Aids in the breakdown of food/facilitates taste
- Balances the pH and protects against cavities
- Provides protection against infection

Water is no Substitute:

- Water dilutes and/or washes the much needed saliva away
- Dry mouth feels like we are thirsty so we sip on water and dries out the soft tissues more
- Does not fight infection
- Usually has a low pH
- Drink water to hydrate but when your mouth feels dry reach for xylitol gum, mints or other oral products containing xylitol

Recommendations:

- 100% sweetened xylitol products (gum, mints and candy)
- Dry mouth products (sprays, toothpaste, tooth gels, etc.)
- Dipping food in milk to increase mucins and proteins

Why Xylitol?

- Causes salivation from the cooling effect that brings water to the environment
- Raises the pH immediately to neutral
- Reduces acids by keeping Strep mutans from replicating and they lose their stickiness
- Provides environment for increased remineralization
- Balances the natural flora and reduces infection:
 - All Strep bacteria
 - Candida Albicans