

# Dry Mouth (Xerostomia) and Oral Health

## General advice

- Add moisture to the air at night with a room humidifier.
- Avoid sugary or acidic foods and drinks because they increase your risk of tooth decay.
- Brush with a fluoride toothpaste.
- Use a fluoride rinse or brush-on fluoride gel before bedtime.
- Visit your dentist at least twice yearly to detect and treat tooth decay or other dental problems.



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## Dry Mouth (Xerostomia) and Oral Health

Xerostomia results in a decrease or absence of saliva. It can cause difficulty in chewing, swallowing and speaking. Dry mouth also increases the risk for tooth decay or fungal infections in the mouth.



### What are the causes of dry mouth?

- Can be caused by certain medications. For example, anti-hypertensives, anti-depressants, antihistamines and muscle relaxants.
- Some diseases affect the salivary glands such as HIV, Sjögren's syndrome, and diabetes.
- Radiation therapy: The salivary glands can be damaged if they are exposed to radiation during cancer treatment.
- Chemotherapy: Drugs used to treat cancer can make saliva thicker, causing the mouth to feel dry.
- Nerve damage: Injury to the head or neck can damage the nerves that tell salivary glands to make saliva.

- Smoking.
- Vitamins deficiency.
- General body dehydration.

**Saliva is important to maintain the health of your teeth and mouth.**

### Symptoms of a dry mouth:

- Mouth sores.
- Cracked lips.
- An infection in the mouth.
- A burning sensation in the mouth.
- A sticky, dry feeling in the mouth.
- Dry, rough and fissured tongue.
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing, tasting or speaking.
- A dry feeling in the throat.
- Increased thirst especially at night.
- Increased risk of salivary glands infections.



### Complications of dry mouth?

- Dental caries.
- Gum diseases.
- Bacterial and fungal infections.
- Acid erosion.
- Bad mouth odor

### How to treat a dry mouth?

- Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free hard candies to stimulate the flow of saliva.
- Limit your caffeine intake.
- Don't use mouthwashes that contain alcohol because they can cause more drying.
- Stop all tobacco use.
- Sip water regularly.
- Try over-the-counter saliva substitutes.
- Breathe through your nose, not your mouth.

