

DENTAL HEALTH NEWS FROM THE NIH

Dry Mouth

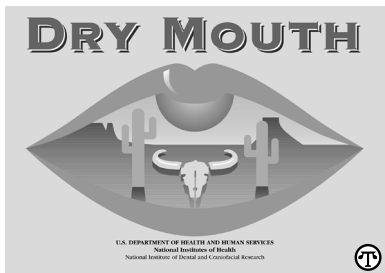
(NAPSA)—What Is Dry Mouth?

Dry mouth is the feeling of not having enough saliva, or spit, in your mouth. If you have dry mouth all or most of the time, you know it can be uncomfortable and may even cause problems with chewing, swallowing or speaking.

Who Is Likely To Have Dry Mouth?

While anyone can have dry mouth, older adults are commonly affected by it, say dental researchers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It's not because of the aging process itself, they say, but because older adults are more likely to take medications or have diseases or conditions that can lead to reduced salivary flow. Medications for high blood pressure, depression and urinary incontinence—and several others—can cause the salivary glands to make less saliva. Additionally, older adults may be more likely to have diseases such as diabetes, which can cause dry mouth. Certain cancer treatments can also affect the salivary glands. Head and neck radiation therapy can cause the glands to produce little or no saliva. Chemotherapy may cause the salivary glands to produce thicker saliva, which makes the mouth feel dry and sticky.

If you think you have dry mouth, the dental experts at NIH advise you to see your doctor or dentist about what you might do to get relief.



To view or order a free copy of a publication about dry mouth, visit www.nidcr.nih.gov.

How Is Dry Mouth Treated?

Dry mouth treatment depends on what is causing the problem. Be sure to see your doctor or dentist to try to find out the reason for your dry mouth and which treatment might be helpful. Treatment may be as simple as changing your medication or its dosage. Your doctor or dentist might also suggest a medication that can help stimulate saliva flow or advise you to use artificial saliva to help keep your mouth wet.

In addition to treatments suggested by your doctor or dentist, here are some things you can do at home:

- Sip water or sugarless drinks throughout the day.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine, since caffeine can dry out the mouth.
- Sip water or sugarless drinks during meals to make chewing and swallowing easier.
- Chew sugarless gum or hard candy to stimulate saliva flow.
- Avoid using tobacco and alcohol, since both dry out the mouth.
- Use a humidifier at night.

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