

- **Saliva thickening agents** - Proxypolypethalene Oxide-Polyox
- **Alcohol free toothpastes and mouth rinses** - Bio Extra Biotene
- **Saliva stimulants** - Chew sugarless gum or suck sugar free mints
- **Saliva stimulating lozenges** - Salivix pastilles and SST tablets
- **Systemic stimulants** - Pilocarpine (this isn't suitable for everyone as it may cause side effects, such as sweating or headaches).

Questions

If you have any other questions that have not been answered by this leaflet, please ask the doctor when you next attend an appointment.

Contact details

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Monday to Thursday, 8.30am - 5pm
and Friday, 8.30am - 1pm.

Out of these working hours please contact:
Luton and Dunstable Hospital out of hours service ☎ **01582 491166**
and **ask for the maxillofacial doctor on call.**

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Date of publication: September 2010

Author: Max Fax Team

Reference: OMFQ05

Version: 2 (Aug 2017)

Review Date: August 2020

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Patient Information

Dry mouth

Oral and Maxillofacial Department



Introduction

It's normal to occasionally have a dry mouth if you're dehydrated or feeling nervous, but a persistently dry mouth can be a sign of an underlying problem.

What is dry mouth?

Dry mouth (known as xerostomia) is a condition which affects your saliva flow and leads to a dry mouth feeling.

What can cause a dry mouth?

A dry mouth can occur when the salivary glands in your mouth don't produce enough saliva. This is often the result of dehydration, which means you don't have enough fluid in your body to produce the saliva you need. It's also common for your mouth to become dry if you're feeling anxious or nervous.

A dry mouth can sometimes be caused by:

- **Medication** – many different medications can cause a dry mouth, including heart medication, blood pressure medication, antidepressants and antihistamines; check the leaflet that comes with your medicine to see if dry mouth is listed as a side effect. The dosage of your medications should not be altered without consulting your medical practitioner first.
- **a blocked nose** – breathing through your mouth while you sleep can cause it to dry out
- **age related** - specifically in post menopausal women
- **diabetes** – a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high
- **radiotherapy to the head and neck** – this can cause the salivary glands to become inflamed (mucositis)
- **Sjögren's syndrome** – a condition where the immune system attacks and damages the salivary glands.

Sjögren's syndrome is the second most common auto-immune rheumatic disease. It predominantly affects women over 50 years of age with variable symptoms including dry eyes, a dry mouth, dry skin, tiredness and vaginal dryness. Also, muscle or joint pain, swollen salivary glands and rashes (especially after being out in the sun). If you are concerned that you may have Sjögren's syndrome please consult your medical practitioner.

What problems can a dry mouth cause?

Saliva plays an important role in keeping your mouth healthy. If you have a dry mouth, you may experience a number of other problems too, such as:

- a burning sensation or soreness in your mouth
- dry lips
- bad breath (halitosis)
- a decreased or altered sense of taste
- recurrent mouth infections, such as oral thrush
- increased incidence of tooth decay or gum disease
- difficulty speaking, eating or swallowing

How can I alleviate the symptoms I have?

There are simple measures you can try to help keep your mouth moist. For example, it may help to:

- increase your fluid intake - take regular sips of cold water or an unsweetened drink
- suck on sugar-free sweets or chew sugar-free gum – this can stimulate your salivary glands to produce more saliva
- suck on ice cubes - the ice will melt slowly and moisten your mouth
- avoid alcohol (including alcohol-based mouthwashes), caffeine and smoking - these can all make a dry mouth worse
- use a lip salve or Vaseline on your lips

Treatments available

If the measures above don't help, there are artificial saliva substitutes available to keep your mouth moist. This may come in the form of a spray, gel or lozenge (these may contain products derived from animals):

Saliva substitutes and stimulants

- Saliva Orthana - Cellulose based
- Glandosane Lubricant - Lactoperoxidase based
- Biotene Oral Balance - Bio Extra
- Proxypolypethalene Oxide – Polyox