

What is Dry Mouth?

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth occurs when there is a reduction in the amount or the quality of saliva in your mouth. It may be transient or persistent. It may vary from being mildly annoying to causing significant oral and dental problems.

Saliva

Most of us take saliva for granted. It is important to make our mouths feel comfortable. It acts as a lubricant during speech and while eating. It helps us taste and digest our food. It helps to clear food debris from the mouth and also assists in neutralising harmful acids that can cause tooth damage.

What causes Dry Mouth?

- Dehydration
- Anxiety
- Medications such as sedatives, antidepressants, antipsychotics, diuretics and antihistamines
- Medical conditions such as diabetes and Sjogren's syndrome
- Menopause
- Radiotherapy to the head and neck region

What Problems Can Dry Mouth Cause?

- Pain or discomfort in the mouth
- Difficulty in eating and speaking
- Tooth decay
- Tooth erosion
- Altered taste sensation
- Infections and trauma to the gums and oral mucosa
- Difficulty wearing dentures

How Can Dry Mouth be Managed?

To reduce the feeling of discomfort and to minimise oral problems you can:

- Drink lots of fluoridated tap water, but avoid sipping as this tends to wash away the limited saliva that is present
- Eat food that requires chewing as this stimulates the flow of saliva
- Chew mint flavoured sugar-free gum. Avoid fruit flavoured ones as these are more acidic and can contribute to erosion of tooth enamel
- Brush twice daily and floss daily

Avoid:

- Snacking and drinking sugary foods between meals to minimise tooth decay
- Avoid acidic foods and drinks such as fizzy drinks, fruit juice and fruit tea to minimise tooth erosion
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and caffeine as these can further reduce the flow of saliva **Visit Your Dentist Regularly** Your dentist will check for any signs of oral problems. They may suggest products that are available which can minimise the effects of your dry mouth and make you feel more comfortable.