

DRY MOUTH

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IMPORTANT

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Introduction

Research has indicated that nearly 32 per cent of people suffer from some form of dry mouth, which is medically called "xerostomia". Additionally, 45 per cent of people who are older than 65 years of age suffer from dryness in the mouth.

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Causes

The dry Mouth condition can have diverse root causes, including:

- Alcohol abuse
- Continuously breathing with the mouth open can also contribute to the problem
- Dehydration conditions that lead to dry mouth include:
 - Blood loss
 - Burns
 - Diarrhoea
 - Excessive sweating
 - Fever
 - Vomiting
- Just getting older
- Nerve damage to the head and neck area from an injury or surgery
- Pesticides on unwashed fruits and vegetables
- Side effect of allopathic medications, including drugs used to treat:
 - Acne
 - Allergies

- Anxiety
- Asthma (certain bronchodilators)
- Colds (antihistamines and decongestants)
- Depression
- Diarrhoea
- Epilepsy
- Heart conditions
- Hypertension (diuretics)
- Nausea
- Obesity
- Pain
- Parkinson's disease
- Psychotic disorders
- Urinary incontinence
- Side effect of muscle relaxants and sedatives
- Smoking or chewing tobacco can affect saliva production and aggravate dry mouth

Dry mouth can be a symptom or side effect of medical conditions, including:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Anaemia
- Autoimmune conditions such as Sjogren's syndrome
- Cystic fibrosis
- Diabetes
- Dysfunctional immune system
- HIV/AIDS
- Hormonal disorders
- Hypertension
- Hypothyroidism - below normal thyroid hormone production
- Lupus (an autoimmune condition - fatigue, skin rash, joint pain and swelling)
- Mumps
- Nerve damage
- Neurological disorders
- Parkinson's disease
- Rheumatoid conditions - arthritis, etc.
- Sarcoidosis - the inflammation of body tissue
- Stroke

Dry mouth can also be a side effect of certain medical treatments:

- Damage to the salivary glands from radiation to the head and neck
- Cancer treatment such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy

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Symptoms of Dry Mouth

Common symptoms of dry mouth include:

- Bad breath

- Burning or tingling sensation in the mouth
- Burning or tingling sensation on the tongue
- Cracked lips
- Difficulty chewing
- Difficulty swallowing
- Difficulty tasting
- Dry feeling in the mouth
- Dry feeling in the throat
- Dry nasal passages
- Dry oily sensation in the soft palate area
- Dry, red, raw tongue
- Frequent thirst
- Hoarseness
- Problems speaking
- Mouth red and shiny
- Rough tongue
- Sensitivity to certain foods
- Sore throat
- Sores in the mouth
- Sores or split skin at the corners of the mouth
- Sticky feeling in the mouth

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Additional Concerns

In addition to the aggravating symptoms already mentioned, dry mouth also increases the risk of:

- Difficulty wearing dentures
- Gingivitis (gum disease)
- Tooth decay
- Mouth infections (thrush etc.)

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Treatment

If dry mouth is caused by a certain medication, then consult your medical practitioner.

Other Treatments include:

- An oral rinse to restore mouth moisture
- Avoid bread and white sugar
- Avoid caffeine drinks
- Avoid using any decongestants and antihistamines
- Breathing through the nose, and not the mouth
- Chewing sugar-free gum
- Don't drink alcohol
- Don't smoke tobacco
- Drinking plenty of fluids to help keep the mouth moist

- Floss thoroughly and regularly to avoid a build-up of plaque which leads to tooth decay
- Protect the teeth and gums by regular brushing with suitable toothpaste
- Protect the teeth and gums by using an antibacterial gargle
- Snack on fruit (wash fruit to remove any pesticides)
- Sucking on a sugar-free sweet
- Using a room vaporizer to add moisture to air - especially when sleeping
- Using an over-the-counter saliva substitute

Some Alternative treatments:

- Alternate the following Tissue Salts hourly during acute phase:
 - Nat Mur - 4 x tabs, 4 x daily
 - Kali Sulph - 4 x tabs, 4 x daily
 - Ferr Phos can also be considered to augment the other remedies - 4 x tabs, 4 x daily
- A teaspoon of equal parts of myrrh, liquorice, and Echinacea mixed with water can be used as a mouthwash 3 to 4 x daily
- Eating celery sticks will not only wet the mouth, they will also help to hydrate the body
- Gargle with half a teaspoon of salt added to a cup of warm water
- Gargle with warm water mixed with cider vinegar and a pinch of salt
- Persons suffering from yeast infections should have plain yogurt as it is known for its ability to fight fungal infections
- Prepare a mouthwash by soaking aniseed, mint leaves, and rosemary in water overnight. Then strain the water and gargle
- Soak fennel seeds and aniseeds in water overnight. Then, every morning, strain the water and gargle
- The instant remedy is to suck a lemon - it will immediately stimulate the salivary glands

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