

Oasis Patient Resource

# Dry Mouth

Courtesy of



# What is dry mouth?

- Feeling that there is not enough saliva in the mouth.
- Everyone has a dry mouth once in a while, if one is nervous, upset or under stress.
- But, if you have a dry mouth **all or most of the time**:
  - It can be uncomfortable
  - Can lead to serious health problems
  - Can also be a sign of certain diseases and conditions.

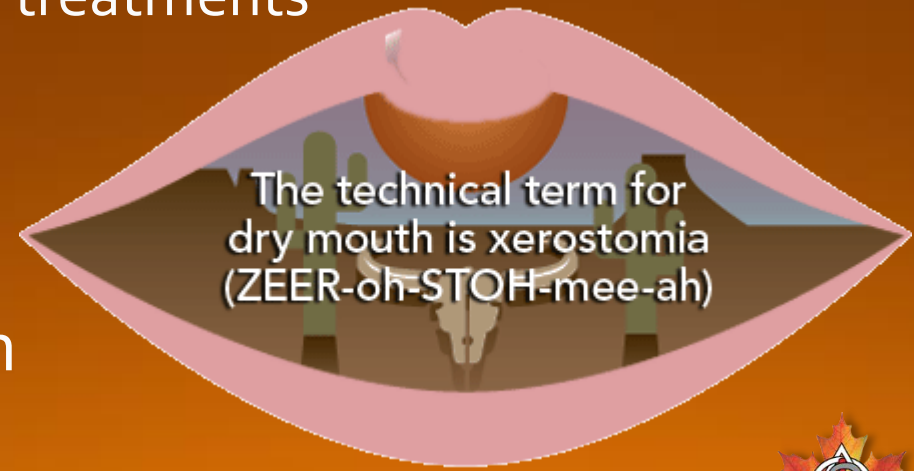
## Symptoms

- Sticky, dry feeling in the mouth
- Trouble chewing, swallowing, tasting, or speaking
- Burning feeling in the mouth
- Dry feeling in the throat
- Cracked lips
- Dry, rough tongue
- Mouth sores
- Infection in the mouth



# What is dry mouth?

- Dry mouth:
  - can cause difficulties in tasting, chewing, swallowing, and speaking
  - can increase your chance of developing dental decay and other infections in the mouth
  - can be caused by certain medications or medical treatments
- Dry mouth is not a normal part of aging.  
So if you think you have dry mouth, see your dentist or physician—there are things you can do to get relief.



# What causes dry mouth?

- People get dry mouth when the glands in the mouth that make saliva are not working properly and there might not be enough saliva to keep your mouth wet.
- Likely causes:
  - Medications side effects
  - Disease, such as those affecting the salivary glands: Sjögren's syndrome, HIV/AIDS, and diabetes
  - Radiation therapy
  - Chemotherapy
  - Nerve damage due to injury to the head or neck that may damage the nerves that tell salivary glands to make saliva



# Why is saliva important?

- Saliva does more than keep the mouth wet:
  - It helps digest food
  - It protects teeth from decay
  - It prevents infection by controlling bacteria and fungi in the mouth
  - It makes it possible for you to chew and swallow
- Without enough saliva you can develop tooth decay or other infections in the mouth. You also might not get the nutrients you need if you cannot chew and swallow certain foods.



# Any treatment for dry mouth?

- Treatment will depend on what is causing dry mouth.
- If you think you have dry mouth, see your dentist or physician, s/he can try to determine what is causing your dry mouth.
- If your dry mouth is caused by medications, your physician might change those or adjust the dosage.
- If your salivary glands are not working right, but can still produce some saliva, your physician or dentist might give you medication that helps the glands to work better.
- Your physician or dentist might suggest that you use artificial saliva to keep your mouth wet.



# What can you do about dry mouth?

- Sip water or sugarless drinks often.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine, such as coffee, tea, and some sodas. Caffeine can dry out the mouth.
- Sip water or a sugarless drink during meals. This will make chewing and swallowing easier. It may also improve the taste of food.
- Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless hard candy to stimulate saliva flow; citrus, cinnamon or mint-flavored candies are good choices.
- Don't use tobacco or alcohol. They dry out the mouth.
- Be aware that spicy or salty foods may cause pain in a dry mouth.
- Use a humidifier at night.



# Tips for keeping your teeth healthy

- Remember, if you have dry mouth, you need to be extra careful to keep your teeth healthy.
- Make sure you:
  - Gently brush your teeth at least twice a day.
  - Floss your teeth every day.
  - Use toothpaste with fluoride in it.
  - Avoid sticky, sugary foods. If you do eat them, brush immediately afterwards.
  - Visit your dentist for a check-up at least twice a year. Your dentist might also suggest you use a prescription-strength fluoride gel (which is like a toothpaste) to help prevent dental decay.



# Questions, Suggestions, Feedback?

- Email us at [oasisdiscussions@cda-adc.ca](mailto:oasisdiscussions@cda-adc.ca)
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*Thank you*

