

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth happens when your body makes less saliva. Up to 60% of older adults have dry mouth.

Saliva is important. It keeps the mouth wet, helps chew and digest foods, prevents dental (tooth) decay, and helps prevent infection.

There are many causes of dry mouth.

- **Medications** — over 400 medications can cause dry mouth
- **Chemotherapy** or **Radiation** to the head and neck
- **Dehydration** (not enough fluids in the body)
- **Smoking**
- **Weakened immune system** (trouble fighting off germs)
- **Health conditions** (e.g., diabetes or Parkinson's disease)



Make sure to follow your work rules on wearing gloves.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Red, cracked or swollen gums
- Dry, cracked tongue
- Changes in taste
- Cracked mouth corners
- Lips that stick to teeth
- Gums that bleed easily
- Bad breath
- Problems with wearing dentures
- Difficulty swallowing or talking

Seek Care if Signs & Symptoms:

- Do not go away
- Cause pain or discomfort
- Do not get better with home remedies



If Your Mouth is Dry, Try These Tips:

- Practice good daily oral hygiene (practice of keeping the mouth healthy) by brushing teeth with high fluoride toothpaste, cleaning dentures, cleaning between the teeth, and having regular dental checkups
- Frequently sip on water or suck on ice chips
- Use water-based lip and oral lubricants
- Chew or suck on sugar-free gum and candy
- Use saliva substitutes (products that help with dry mouth)
- Use non-alcoholic mouth rinses
- Use a cool mist humidifier at night
- Ask for medical advice about medications

Avoid These Products That Can Worsen Dry Mouth:

- Alcohol or alcohol products
- Glycerin or lemon toothette swabs
- Caffeine
- Foods that are spicy, acidic, dry, sweet or sticky
- Lemon or cinnamon flavored candy or gum

