

Dry Mouth

If you are suffering from a dry mouth, you are not alone. One of the most common complaints in the dental office is that of a chronically dry mouth. In fact, about one in every four adults experience the symptoms associated with this problem. A dry mouth is caused by the improper function of the saliva producing glands. Common causes of dry mouth are medications, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, stress and depression, diabetes and kidney dialysis, rheumatoid conditions and old age. Medications known to cause dry mouth include antidepressants, antihistamines, decongestants, antihypertensives, antiparkinsonians, antipsychotics, certain cold and flu medications, sleeping medications, betablockers and diuretics.

Typical symptoms of dry mouth may include thirst, difficulty with swallowing or speaking, the need to drink frequently while eating, soreness or burning of the mouth, increased number of dental cavities and bad breath and a dry throat. Often these symptoms can be alleviated by stimulating the flow of saliva with sugarless gum or candy or by the frequent sipping of water. For more severe cases, there are artificial saliva formulations available which help to coat the tissues and prevent soreness of the mouth and throat.

Aside from the annoyance dry mouth usually causes, the reduced flow of saliva can have a devastating effect on the teeth. The saliva in our mouths acts as a buffer and a cleanser to prevent cavities from forming. When the amount of the saliva is significantly reduced, there is a greatly increased risk of severe tooth decay, especially if no additional preventive measures are taken.

Fortunately, there are several steps that we can take to prevent the formation of cavities. Patients experiencing dry mouth should be seen at least every three months for a dental cleaning and for a fluoride treatment which will help strengthen the teeth and make them more resistant to decay. Our office may prescribe toothpaste especially high in fluoride or toothpaste that is extra gentle on your gums.

It is also important for those people who experience the symptoms of dry mouth to take proper care of their teeth between dental visits. Brushing at least twice daily with a fluoride containing toothpaste, flossing, and the use of a fluoride mouth rinse and gel will all help in the prevention of dental cavities. Also, foods with high sugar content should be reduced or avoided as a frequent consumption of sweets between meals is a significant cause of tooth decay. Talk to your doctor about alternatives to your current medications. If you are suffering from a dry mouth, please take advantage of these excellent preventive measures. They are painless, inexpensive, quick and effective.

**If you have any further questions please call our office at 905-508-2244.
We love to hear from our patients.**