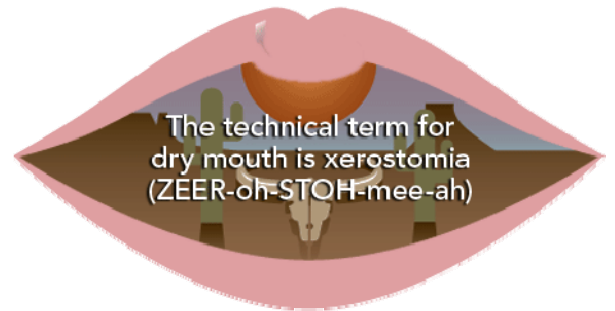


Dry Mouth (Xerostomia)

Dry mouth, otherwise known as Xerostomia, is an uncomfortable oral condition as a result of limited saliva. Dry mouth can have a large impact on oral health. Saliva has proteins and enzymes which are essential for lubricating and cleansing the mouth. People with dry mouth are at a much higher risk of cavities, because food debris is not being washed away from teeth properly.

Causes of Dry Mouth

- Medications: Dry mouth is a common side effect of many medications. In most cases the effect is not noticeable, however for certain medications or people taking numerous medications, the symptoms may become a problem. If you are concerned about your particular medication, talk to Dr. Foreman
- Aging: Dry mouth is not a natural part of aging, however it is often seen in the elderly due to increases in medications and health conditions.
- Mouth breathing: Breathing through the mouth instead of the nose dries out the oral tissues
- Snoring: Snoring causes an increased amount of oxygen intake through the mouth.
- Dehydration: Infrequent drinking
- Chemotherapy: This changes the components of the saliva and can cause a reduction in the amount produced.
- Radiation: Radiation treatment to the head or neck can damage the salivary glands causing a decrease in the amount of saliva produced
- Health Conditions: Health conditions such as Sjogren's syndrome, diabetes, depression, and some other hormonal conditions can affect saliva flow



Signs and Symptoms of Dry Mouth

Sign and symptoms may not appear until almost half the amount of salivary production is lost.

- Excessive thirst
- Bad breath
- Trouble digesting or tasting food
- Dry lips, Difficulty swallowing
- Malnutrition
- Difficulty with speaking or pronunciation
- High tooth decay rate
- Frequent oral infections or sores
- Puffy, inflamed bleeding gums (especially around the front teeth)

Treatments and Relief of Dry Mouth

It is often not possible to correct the condition of dry mouth itself. The treatment that is suggested below helps relieve the symptoms of dry mouth to make it more tolerable.

- Saliva substitute or lubricants – our office can recommend some common brands
- Sip water frequently
- Suck on ice cubes - do not chew this could harm the teeth
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Use of xylitol gum or lozenges (Xylitol is a “sugar-free” sweetener that doesn’t harm the teeth)
- Eliminate the use of tobacco
- **Avoid sugary drinks/food or acidic foods to reduce the risk of decay**
- Prescription medications may help in some cases – talk to Dr. Foreman for more information

