

# Xerostomia

## Dry mouth and saliva production

Xerostomia, also called dry mouth, occurs when the body cannot produce enough saliva.

Signs and symptoms can include—

- ❖ a sticky, dry feeling in the mouth and throat
- ❖ bad breath
- ❖ difficulty chewing, swallowing, and tasting
- ❖ bad tastes in the mouth
- ❖ plaque and tartar buildup on the teeth and gums
- ❖ mouth sores
- ❖ difficulty wearing dentures.

Dry mouth can lead to bad breath because saliva is needed to wash odor-causing bacteria from the teeth, gums and tongue. Dry mouth can be caused by certain medical conditions, treatments, and medications, such as Sjögren's syndrome, diabetes, HIV, AIDS, and Parkinson's disease. Smoking also causes dry mouth. Additionally, tobacco contributes to bad breath because it coats the teeth and gums with odor-producing tar and nicotine.

Some medical treatments, particularly chemotherapy and radiation therapy, can also cause dry mouth, and, in addition, more than 1000 medications and treatments list dry mouth as a possible side effect.

Dry mouth is serious because, if it is untreated, it can lead to rampant tooth decay.



*Drink fluids*



*Moisture replacement products*

## Diagnosis and treatment

To make matters worse, when dry mouth sufferers use sugar-sweetened gums, candies, or drinks to ease the dryness, the sugar provides fuel for the plaque and enables decay to develop even more extensively.

To determine the best treatment for your dry mouth, we take a complete health history and perform a thorough examination.

A professional cleaning will remove plaque and tartar, and we will restore any decayed teeth.

We also talk with you about steps you can take at home, such as brushing and flossing after every meal; running a humidifier at night; avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco, which dry out the mouth; and using sugarless candies and chewing gum sweetened with xylitol, which inhibits decay-causing bacteria.

Depending on the situation, we may also recommend artificial saliva, moisture replacement products, or a moisturizing toothpaste, and we may suggest a fluoride treatment to strengthen the enamel of your teeth.

With proper treatment and care, we can ease your dry mouth, and help you be healthier and more comfortable.