

COPING WITH A DRY MOUTH

ADVICE FOR RESIDENTS

What are the effects of a dry mouth?

Having a dry mouth (xerostomia) can be very uncomfortable and may cause difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking, smiling and your sense of taste may be affected. There is an increased risk of developing infection in your mouth, bad breath and a coated tongue. If your mouth is dry at night then your sleep might also be disturbed.

If a dry mouth remains untreated, it can become sore, which might affect your general health and sense of well-being.

What can I do to help?

- Good oral hygiene is very important; you should brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Without sufficient saliva, tooth decay is much more likely to occur, therefore, any foods or drinks taken between meals should be sugar free.
- Be sure to drink plenty, water is best and sucking ice chips can help. Remember, drinking fruit juice, sugary drinks and flavoured drinks between meals can cause enamel damage such as tooth decay and acid erosion.
- Chewing sugar free gum will help promote saliva production.
- Moisturising gels and saliva replacements are available to buy from the pharmacist and can also be prescribed. These can be used as often as you need to during the day and at night. They can be especially helpful to use before eating and speaking and can be applied to the fitting surface of dentures before insertion.
E.g. BioXtra (gel and spray), **Saliva Orthana** (spray),
Biotene Oralbalance (gel),

Saliva replacement products and moisturising gels should not be applied within half an hour of brushing your teeth as some toothpastes contain detergents which may inactivate the protective ingredients of the product.

There are dry mouth systems available which contain a saliva replacement, toothpaste, mouthwash and chewing gum. These are especially designed for sore, dry mouths.

How can I treat my dry lips?

A facial moisturising cream applied frequently will keep lips moist and soft. Petroleum jelly products are less helpful.

What should I do if I am worried, where can I find out more?

You should consult your dentist.

Caring for you, locally