

## Maxillofacial

# Xerostomia (Dry mouth)

### What is xerostomia?

Xerostomia is a condition which affects the flow of saliva. It causes the mouth to feel dry.

### The functions of saliva

- It lubricates the mouth to keep teeth clean and fight decay
- It contains enzymes which break down food – this makes swallowing easier
- It helps taste and speech

### The symptoms of a dry mouth

- Thick and sticky saliva
- Experiencing a burning sensation and sensitivity to certain foods
- Soreness
- The mouth lining becoming red and shiny

### The causes

There are many different causes, for example:

- A side effect of medication
- The result of a medical condition – for example, diabetes or Sjogren's syndrome
- The result of medical treatment – for example, radiotherapy



## Patient Information

### How can I relieve the symptoms?

There is no way to prevent this condition. You can ease the symptoms by

- Sipping sugar-free fluids
- Stimulate saliva with sugar free gum or sweets
- Avoid spicy or dry foods
- Eat soft creamy foods such as soups, casseroles, or foods with a high liquid content such as melon, grapes or ice cream
- Gently massaging your salivary glands to stimulate saliva flow

### Products to use

There are gels and sprays which are designed to provide moisture and comfort.

There are toothpastes and mouth rinses especially formulated to help with oral hygiene.

Your GP, dentist or pharmacist can advise you about these.

As there is a higher risk of dental decay in a dry mouth it is important to visit your dentist regularly.

### Getting help

If you think you may have xerostomia, go to your doctor or dentist for advice.

**Adapted from:** - British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons.

Available from, <http://www.baoms.org.uk/>

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact clinic 11 on 024 7696 6500 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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## Patient Information

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