

Medications and your mouth

Tip sheet

The medications that you take can affect your oral health

Dry Mouth

Some medications can reduce the amount of saliva (spit) that you have in your mouth. Having a dry mouth can lead to tooth decay and gum disease. Saliva can play an important role in protecting your teeth. Not only does it help you chew and swallow your food, but it can also help your teeth by repairing some of the damage to the tooth's surface made by bacteria in your mouth and by reducing bacteria in your mouth.

How do I know if I have dry mouth?

You might be experiencing dry mouth if:

- You have trouble eating, speaking and swallowing
- Your mouth feels dry and sore
- You notice that you have less saliva or that your saliva is thick and stringy
- You have cracked lips
- You have bad breath
- If your tongue sticks to the roof of your mouth when you wake up
- You notice that you have altered or impaired taste.



What medications cause dry mouth?

Dry mouth is a common condition. It can be caused when the saliva producing part of your mouth is affected by taking over the counter or prescription medicines including antihistamines, antidepressants, painkillers, decongestants, medications prescribed for high blood pressure, ADHD and many more.

Asthma Inhalers (puffers)

Asthma inhalers can also cause dry mouth. It's important to rinse your mouth with water after using an asthma inhaler, particularly the ones that contain steroids. Over time these can increase your risk of tooth decay and enamel erosion and oral fungal infections (thrush).

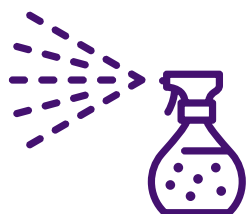


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How do I manage dry mouth?

- Sip lots of tap water throughout the day
- Put water in a spray bottle and spray in your mouth as often as you like
- Try to limit drinks with caffeine in them such as coffee, some soft drinks, and some energy drinks
- Chew sugar-free gum
- Talk to your dental practitioner or pharmacist about saliva substitutes
- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste. Your dental practitioner can advise you if you need a special toothpaste.



Medications that contain sugar

Some medicines such as cough syrups, cough lollies, antacids and some vitamins can contain sugar, and if used regularly, may increase your risk of tooth decay. Many liquid medicines made for children have added sugar to improve their taste. Be sure to rinse your mouth with water after using medications that have sugar and talk to your GP or pharmacist about sugar free alternatives where possible.



Osteoporosis

Some osteoporosis medicines can be associated with increased risk of complications when taking teeth out. Your medical practitioner will have already considered the risk and benefits before starting you on these medications. Please let your dental practitioner know if you are taking these medicines, so that they can reduce the risk of complications happening.

Side effects

If you notice any mouth ulcers or other side effects after starting a new medication it is important to advise your medical practitioner as soon as possible.

Other medications

Let your dental practitioner know about any medications that you are regularly taking. Certain medications such as blood thinners can interfere with wound healing or blood clotting. Your dental practitioner will need to know about these so that they can manage any dental treatment that you may require.



For further information, scan the QR code or visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/oralhealth/prevention/Pages/default.aspx.