



## .....What is Dry Mouth?.....

Dry mouth is very common among older adults —1 in 3 have this condition. But, it is not a normal part of aging.

Dry mouth can make it difficult to eat, taste food, swallow, and speak. Common symptoms of dry mouth are:

- Frequent thirst
- Bad breath
- Cracked lips or corners of the mouth; sores in or around the mouth
- A sticky, dry feeling in the mouth and/or throat
- A burning or tingling feeling in the mouth and especially on the tongue
- Sore throat or hoarseness

## .....How saliva protects your mouth.....

- Washes away food particles
- Kills bacteria
- Neutralizes acids that cause tooth decay
- Strengthens teeth with minerals like calcium and fluoride
- Moistens your mouth, nose, and throat

**For more information, or help finding a dental provider, call**

**1-888-4ELDERS**

**At Washington Dental Service Foundation, our mission** is to eliminate oral disease and improve overall health. With an emphasis on prevention and access to early care, the WDS Foundation supports innovative approaches and practical solutions to improve oral –and overall– health.

For more information about oral health and the Washington Dental Service Foundation, please visit [www.seniorsoralhealth.org](http://www.seniorsoralhealth.org).

**DELTA DENTAL**  
**Washington Dental Service  
Foundation**

*Community Advocates for Oral Health*

# .....Dry Mouth.....

**A guide for your oral and overall health**



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## ••••• Talk to your healthcare providers if your mouth feels dry •••••

Many prescription and over-the-counter medications contribute to dry mouth. For example, drugs that treat:

- Depression or Anxiety
- Asthma & Allergies
- High Blood Pressure
- Parkinson's Disease
- Pain
- Acid Reflux
- Urinary Incontinence



Dry mouth can also be caused by health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure or cancer treatments.

Do not stop taking your medications. Talk with your pharmacist or doctor about dry mouth. There may be different medications you can try.



## ••••• Manage dry mouth in healthy ways •••••

- 1 Drink extra water (with your doctor's approval).**  
Sip water during the day and with meals. Fluoridated water is best.
- 2 Use a saliva substitute or oral moisturizer.**  
These are available in most pharmacies. They help moisten your mouth, reduce bacteria, and increase comfort. Use during the day and before bedtime.
- 3 Chew sugarless gum or mints, especially those with xylitol.**  
Xylitol is a natural sweetener that protects teeth from decay.
- 4 Use a humidifier at night.**  
The extra moisture can help you feel more comfortable.

## ••••• Avoid painful and costly oral disease •••••

Dry mouth causes:

- Cavities in the roots of teeth
- Diseased gums



*An example of root cavities, a common consequence of dry mouth.*

Photo: Dr. Brathall

### If you have dry mouth...

#### Get regular dental visits.

Be sure to tell your dentist your mouth feels dry.

#### Protect your teeth with fluoride.

Use fluoride toothpaste and fluoride rinse. Your doctor or dentist can apply fluoride varnish or prescribe high-fluoride toothpaste.

#### Be sure to avoid:

- Candy and cough drops (unless sugar-free)
- High-sugar drinks, carbonated drinks and diet sodas, citrus drinks
- Drinks with caffeine or alcohol
- Mouthwash with alcohol
- Overly salty or spicy food
- Tobacco products