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Xerostomia (Dry Mouth) and Wearing Dentures

Presence of adequate amounts of **saliva** between denture & gum tissues is essential for denture comfort and fit. Without enough saliva, dentures will have little to no retention and won't stay in place. Without the lubricating effects of saliva, tissues contacting a denture will become chafed and irritated & can also cause a burning sensation and sores.

Some Common Causes of Dry Mouth

- Medications: There are over 400 commonly prescribed medications that have xerostomia as a possible side effect, and this is a frequent cause of dryness. (*e.g.: antidepressants & blood pressure medications*)
- Aging: The amount of saliva produced by salivary glands lessens as a person ages.
- Illnesses: Xerostomia is sometimes associated with certain illnesses or conditions such as chronic diarrhea, liver dysfunction, or Sjogren's syndrome.
- Radiation therapy: Radiotherapy that is used to treat some head and neck cancers may reduce salivary gland function as a side effect.
- Habits: Chronic mouth breathing and inadequate fluid consumption (especially here in Arizona) often will cause dry mouth.

What Should I Do?

If you have symptoms of Dry Mouth, mention this to your dentist and he/she will be able to suggest the best course of action for you. You can also:

- Make sure your mouth is moist before eating.
- Remove your dentures & rinse your mouth after every meal. Try drinking 2% or whole milk with meals.
- Drink more frequently while eating. Try drinking 2% or whole milk with meals
- Eat more high water content fruits and vegetables (e.g. cucumbers, melons.)
- Suck on sugarless hard candy.
- Do not sleep with your dentures. Soak them in water overnight.
- Keep a glass of water by your bed at night.
- Take more frequent sips of non-caffeinated, sugar free drinks during the day, such as cool water.
- Restrict caffeine intake.
- Use a cool humidifier overnight
- Avoid alcohol and alcohol containing mouthwashes
- For Dry lips use hydrous lanolin USP, Banana Boat Aloe with Vitamin E lip balm, or Blistex Herbal. (Chronic use of Vaseline is drying and should be avoided.)

Products

Although there is no single way to treat Dry Mouth, there are mouth products that are specifically manufactured to relieve the symptoms of Dry Mouth. These include special toothpastes, mouthwashes, oral gels, oral lozenges, and chewing gums. The following are examples of commercial saliva substitutes, stimulants, and moisturizing products, which are available without a prescription and can be ordered from many pharmacies:

- Forever Mints (can be purchased on Amazon)
- SalivaSure® Tablets
- Oral Balance® (GSK) Gel
- Bitoene Toothpaste®
- Oasis Mouth Spray