

Saliva Management: Excess Saliva

Speech and Language Therapy Department



Patient information leaflet

Difficulty controlling saliva can happen because it is being swallowed less often, or because of weakened muscles in the mouth, tongue or throat. This can cause problems with speaking and result in discomfort, embarrassment and avoidance of social situations.

This leaflet offers advice on how to manage excess saliva.

How can I manage excess saliva?

There are a variety of options for controlling excess saliva and these are listed below:

Encourage more frequent swallowing

This can be done by sucking boiled sweets, chewing gum or regularly sipping water. These options may not be suitable for those with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia). If you are unsure, please discuss this with your Speech and Language Therapist.

Positioning

Try to ensure you are as upright as possible when sitting and/or standing. In some cases, an appointment with a Physiotherapist or an Occupational Therapist may be helpful as difficulties with posture can make saliva control more difficult.

Medication

There are several medications that can reduce the amount of saliva a person makes. If you would like more information, talk to your doctor about whether any of these medications could be right for you.

Natural products

The following natural products may help to reduce how much saliva you make. Please talk about these with your doctor before making any changes. Some of these products are not recommended if you are taking certain medications.

- Dark grape juice
- Sage capsules, tea or tincture (available from health food shops)
- Ginger root extract (available from health food shops)

Swallow reminders

- Swallow reminder badges: These are simple gadgets that beep or vibrate to remind you to swallow regularly.
- Swallow prompt Apps: Apps, or 'mobile applications' are programs that can be downloaded onto Smart phones and tablet computers. They beep or vibrate to remind you to swallow regularly.

Suction devices

Suction machines can be used to clear saliva from the mouth. They can usually be provided via your doctor, District Nurse or a Respiratory Physiotherapist. You will need some training on how to use the machine before you start.

Botox

In some cases, doctors advise injections of botulinum toxin into the salivary glands, which can reduce how much saliva is made. One dose can last up to three months, but using botox in this way carries risks which include increased difficulty swallowing and dry mouth. Speak with your doctors if you wish to explore this option.

Mouth care

Cleaning your mouth regularly is important for everyone, but especially for people with swallowing difficulties. Good oral hygiene will reduce the amount of bacteria in the mouth.

Make sure to:

- Brush your teeth/dentures, gums and tongue morning and night
- Rinse with mouthwash
- Make sure that your mouth is clear of food after meals (check your cheeks, teeth/dentures and tongue)

Anyone with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) should seek advice from their Speech and Language Therapist if they are unsure about safe changes to their mouth care regime.

Reference source

- <https://www.nice.org.uk/advice/esuom15/ifp/chapter/what-is-increased-saliva-production>

Contact details

Please contact the Speech and Language Therapy department if you have any questions or concerns:

Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 4680

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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