

# Saliva Management: Dry Mouth

## Speech and Language Therapy Department



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet offers advice on how to minimise your dry mouth symptoms.

## What is dry mouth and what causes it?

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Dry mouth is a common problem and can be caused by a variety of medical conditions, treatments and medications.

## Why is saliva important?

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Saliva is important for hydration, lubrication and cleansing the mouth. People with dry mouth are much more prone to oral health problems including oral yeast infections and tooth decay. Excellent oral hygiene is necessary to prevent cavities and gum disease.

## How can dry mouth be managed?

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There are several options for managing dry mouth and these are listed below:

### Hydration

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Many people don't drink enough fluids and this will contribute to a dry mouth. Sip cool water throughout the day, or let ice chips melt in your mouth (never chew ice!).

Sipping water/sucking ice is contraindicated if you need thickened fluids. If this is the case, ask your Speech and Language Therapist for advice regarding how to safely optimise oral hydration and hygiene.

### Changing oral hygiene products

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Many toothpastes advertised for tartar control, whitening etc. contain chemicals that can damage dry oral tissues.

Ask your doctor, dentist or other health care professional for information about detergent free / specialist 'dry mouth' toothpaste products.

Avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol.

## Food and drink

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Minimise food and drinks which are highly acidic (e.g. fizzy drinks, citrus fruits, tomatoes, etc). Without the neutralizing ability of saliva, high acid content can erode the teeth and can make your mouth sore.

Sugar, especially in retentive (sticky) form, is very damaging to the teeth. Sucrose feeds bacteria that cause cavities.

Avoid high daily doses of caffeine.

## Are there any saliva substitutes?

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There are many commercial saliva substitutes, rinses and moisturising gels which can be helpful in alleviating dry mouth. Ask your Speech and Language Therapist, doctor or dentist for more information.

## Reference sources

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- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dry-mouth/>
- <https://www.dentalhealth.org/dry-mouth>
- <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summary/treatment-of-dry-mouth.html>

## Contact details

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

**Telephone:** 01483 571122 **ext** 4680

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## PALS and Advocacy contact details

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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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