



Dry Mouth



Overview

If salivary glands in your mouth don't produce enough saliva, you have a condition we call "dry mouth." It can be uncomfortable. It can lead to problems with your mouth and teeth.

Causes

There can be many reasons for dry mouth. It tends to happen naturally as people get older. It may be caused by a medicine you are taking. It may be caused by alcohol, tobacco or drug use. Dry mouth can be caused by an injury to nerves in your head or neck. It can result from diseases such as diabetes or Alzheimer's, or from autoimmune diseases. And, it can be caused by radiation therapy, which is used to treat cancer.

Symptoms

Dry mouth makes your mouth feel sticky. Your saliva may feel thick and stringy. This makes it hard for you to speak. You may have bad breath. You may have a sore throat and difficulty swallowing.

Complications

Saliva is important for flushing food particles away from your teeth. When you have dry mouth, plaque builds up on your teeth. You may have tooth decay and gum disease. You may have mouth sores and cracked lips. You can also get a yeast infection in your mouth. We call that "thrush."

Treatment

There are ways to relieve dry mouth. Products such as rinses, moisturizers and artificial saliva help. There are medications that help your glands produce saliva. If a medication is causing the dryness, you may need to change to a different one. And your dentist may recommend fluoride to help protect your teeth.