

Taking Care Of Your Sore or Dry Mouth



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You may have a sore or dry mouth for many different reasons such as:



- The side effect of a medicine you are taking.
- A disease which causes you to make less saliva (spit).
- Treatment for cancer, such as cancer medicines or radiation therapy.
- Damage to nerves in your head or neck.

The medical name for dry mouth is xerostomia. The medical name for a red, raw mouth with sores, is stomatitis. Sometimes, treatment for other health problems may have to stop till the stomatitis gets better. So, it is very important to take good care of your mouth, and tell your health care provider right away if you notice it getting worse.

Your health care provider may want you to:

- Use artificial saliva (spit).
- Gargle with a baking soda mouthwash (1/2 teaspoon baking soda mixed in 1 quart [4 cups] of water)
- Use medicine on the sore places.
- Gargle with a special mouthwash with medicine in it.

Here are some things you can do to help your mouth feel better, and heal:

Food –

- Small meals and snacks may work better than fewer large meals.
- Eat food cold or at room temperature - not hot.
- Suck on ice-chips, or eat food such as popsicles and frozen juice bars (but not citrus flavors such as orange, pineapple or lemon), ice-cream and watermelon.
- Eat soft food such as milk shakes, baby food, soft fruit, mashed potatoes, cooked cereals, eggs, cottage cheese, macaroni and cheese, custards, puddings.
- Puree cooked food to make it smoother and easier to eat.
- Make dry food moist by using butter, margarine, gravy or sauce. Or, dip it in liquids.
- Keep a glass of water nearby, and take sips often.
- These foods may be hard to swallow, or may make your mouth hurt:
 - Carbonated (fizzy) sodas or drinks.
 - Alcohol, such as beer, wine or liquor.
 - Citrus juices, such as orange, pineapple or grapefruit juice, lemonade or limeade.

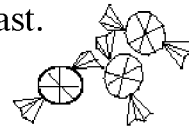


(over)

- Acidic food, such as tomatoes or tomato sauces.
- Salty or spicy food.
- Foods or drinks that are very hot.
- Hard or crunchy food such as raw vegetables, granola or toast.



- Suck on hard, sugarless sour candy or chew sugarless gum to help make more saliva (spit).
- Rinse out your mouth with water after each meal, and after drinking a sweet drink.



Mouth care (Wash your hands well with soap and water before doing mouth care) –



- If you wear dentures, you may need to leave them out till your health care provider tells you to start wearing them again.
- If you are wearing dentures or bridges, take them out and clean them every day. Clean your dentures with a toothbrush and toothpaste. Take them out at night, and soak them in warm water or a denture solution. Also, take your dentures out as much as you can during the day, and whenever you use mouthwash. After each meal, brush your gums gently with a soft brush, and rinse out your mouth with water. If your dentures are rubbing on your gums and starting a sore place, have your dentist check and fix them right away.



- Use a lanolin-based (check the label) lip balm to keep your lips from getting dry.



- Use a soft bristle toothbrush with a small head.
- Brush your teeth at least 2 times a day. If you can, also brush after each meal. When you brush, brush in small circles. Do not brush side to side. Brush gently so you don't hurt your gums and make sores on them.



- A toothpaste that does not foam, such as Biotene “Dry Mouth Toothpaste” and Rembrandt “Naturals”, will be more comfortable for you. Biotene “Dry Mouth Toothpaste” has enzymes in it that help you make more saliva. You can use regular toothpaste, but don't get one that has Sodium Laurel Sulfate in it. This is what makes toothpaste foam.



- You may use mouthwash that is antibacterial and that does not have alcohol in it, such as Biotene Gentle Mouthwash. This mouthwash has enzymes in it that help you make more saliva. If your mouthwash is too strong for your sore mouth, you can mix it with warm water to make it less strong.

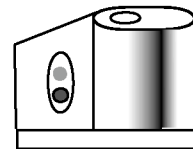


- Every day, use dental floss or dental tape to clean between your teeth.

Other hints –



- Do not smoke or chew tobacco.
- Use artificial saliva, such as Salivart, when your mouth feels dry.
- Run a humidifier in your bedroom at night.



If your mouth gets more painful, sore or dry, tell your health care provider.

If you have any questions, ask your health care provider.

