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Your mouth may feel dry occasionally if you are dehydrated or feeling anxious, but when this happens all the time, it could indicate an underlying health condition.¹ Find out what causes chronic dry mouth and possible ways to relieve it.

WHAT IS DRY MOUTH?

- If your mouth often feels dry and uncomfortable, you may have xerostomia — the medical term for dry mouth — which occurs when you are not producing enough saliva in the mouth/oral cavity. Saliva has antibacterial and lubricating properties that in sufficient amounts keep the mouth healthy.²
- If left untreated, dry mouth makes you more vulnerable to tooth decay, gum disease and other oral health issues.²
- Dry mouth is common, affecting about 1 in 5 people, and the risk for developing it increases with age.¹

SYMPTOMS OF DRY MOUTH

The main symptom is a feeling of stickiness in your mouth due to the lack of saliva. Other symptoms may include:¹

- Increased thirst
- Difficulty eating, speaking, or swallowing.

COMPLICATIONS OF DRY MOUTH

- When you have chronic dry mouth, you may develop:^{1,2}
- Tooth decay
- Gum disease
- Lip, tongue or mouth sores and pain
- Increased susceptibility to mouth infection, including oral thrush
- Soreness or burning sensation in mouth
- Diminished or altered sense of taste
- Inability to eat certain foods
- Cracked lips
- Hoarseness
- Halitosis (bad breath)
- Difficulty wearing dentures

WHAT CAUSES DRY MOUTH?

- Dry mouth occurs when your salivary glands do not produce a sufficient amount of saliva in the mouth/oral cavity.^{1,2} Possible causes for this include:^{1,2,3}
- Medications. If you refer to the patient information leaflet that forms part of your medication package, you may notice “dry mouth” listed as a side effect. This may also be complicated further when multiple medications are taken with this side effect.^{1,2} Do not stop taking your medication or make changes to your dose. Always consult a healthcare professional if you have any questions or concerns.
- Ageing: it is more common in older people who tend to be on more medications and more likely to have a recent change in health.²
- Cancer treatment, for those who undergo chemotherapy and radiation therapy, commonly for head and neck cancer. The salivary glands can be permanently damaged, and saliva can be reduced and/or its consistency changed.²
- Dehydration. Not taking in sufficient fluids.¹
- Alcohol, which is acidic and can have a dehydrating effect.³
- Tobacco use. Smoking can alter your saliva flow rate, resulting in dry mouth.³
- Mouth breathing. You may experience a dry mouth, particularly on waking, if you sleep with your mouth open. This can occur because of habit, clogged nasal passages or another health condition such as obstructive sleep apnea.³



- Substance abuse. Many street drugs (for example, methamphetamine) reduce saliva in your mouth/oral cavity. Drug abusers tend to have a higher incidence of tooth decay and gum disease.²
- You may experience dry mouth if you're dehydrated, or your blood sugar levels are constantly high. Dry mouth can also occur because of the medications taken.³ Do not stop taking your medication or make changes to your dose. Always consult a healthcare professional if you have any questions or concerns.
- Sjogren's syndrome. This autoimmune disease can attack the salivary and tear glands, causing dry mouth and eyes.²

MANAGING AND PREVENTING DRY MOUTH

- To help relieve symptoms of dry mouth and reduce your risk of developing it:
- Stay well hydrated. Try taking frequent sips of water.²
- Speak to your pharmacist about medications specially formulated for dry mouth, for example Andolex[®] Wildberry Pastilles. These pastilles are available without a prescription and contain Ectoin[®], a natural cell-protective molecule that protects and hydrates dry, irritated mucous membranes, and supports their regeneration. Andolex[®] Wildberry Pastilles also have anti-inflammatory properties.
- Avoid tobacco, caffeine, alcohol, fizzy drinks and acidic, spicy, dry or sugary foods.^{1,2}
- Suck on ice cubes or sugarless ice lollies to keep your mouth moist and assist with hydration.¹
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free mints to help stimulate saliva production.¹
- Use a cool-mist humidifier. This may help if you tend to breathe through your mouth at night.¹
- Practice good oral hygiene and visit your dentist regularly to keep your mouth healthy and address any complications.^{1,2}
- Ask your doctor if you can take medications that cause dry mouth in the morning, instead of at night. Dry mouth at night is more likely to cause tooth decay and other dental problems.¹

WHEN TO SEE YOUR DOCTOR

It is normal for your mouth to feel dry occasionally, but if you have dry mouth all the time, you should consult your doctor.¹

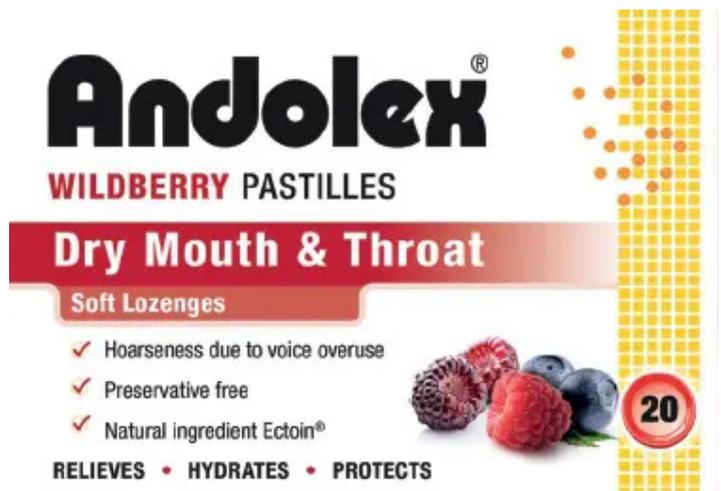
Over time, chronic dry mouth can cause damage to teeth and gums.^{1,2} Early diagnosis and treatment can reduce your symptoms before they worsen.¹

DIAGNOSING DRY MOUTH

Your doctor or dentist may examine you for signs of dry mouth. They may also check for possible associated complications of dry mouth such as tooth decay and gum disease.¹

TREATING DRY MOUTH

Dry mouth treatments are aimed at increasing saliva production and to restore moisture to the mouth.^{1,2} Your dentist and GP can help to find suitable options for you and work out a treatment regimen to address both the symptoms and complications of dry mouth.² If your doctor suspects a medication is causing your dry mouth, they may consider making adjustments to this. Do not stop taking your medication or make changes to your dose. Always consult a healthcare professional if you have any questions or concerns. If your dry mouth is a symptom of an underlying health condition, your doctor may help to identify and treat the problem.¹



MEDICAL REFERENCES

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