



Oxford Health
NHS Foundation Trust



Adult Speech and Language Therapy







Saliva Management

OH 037.23

Managing Thick Saliva and/or a Dry Mouth

The following suggestions may help to keep your mouth moist and thin your secretions:

Food and Drink

-  Please note that someone with reduced awareness or poor oral control should not be given chewing gum or food or sweets to suck as they present a risk of choking
-  Ensure that you are drinking plenty throughout the day, unless instructed otherwise by your doctor you should aim to drink between 8-10 cups of fluid a day
-  Increase your fluid by having jelly, green vegetables, sorbet and other foods with high water content
-  Smoking tends to make your saliva/secretions thicker so reducing the amount you smoke or stopping smoking completely will be beneficial
-  Avoid or reduce your consumption of caffeine
-  Take frequent sips of water to prevent dryness

- ✔ Sucking a sweet (sugar free boiled sweet or hard mint) can stimulate saliva production, as can chewing gum or sucking on crushed ice and frozen fruit.
- ✔ Some people find drinking dark grape juice, papaya juice or taking papaya extract tablets anecdotally helpful

Routine

- ✔ Steam inhalation e.g. breathing in steam whilst in a hot steamy shower, from a mug/cup of hot water or using a steam inhalation cup
- ✔ Increase the moisture content of the air in your home. This can be done by opening windows when able and using bowls of water or a room humidifier
- ✔ Avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol
- ✔ Use lip balm or Vaseline to lips regularly
- ✔ Remove dentures at night
- ✔ Ensure your mouth is cleaned regularly with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste
- ✔ Swab mouth with water soaked gauze or iced swabs
- ❗ Please note that placing items such as swabs or gauze into someone's mouth should be done with caution. The

individual should be able to tolerate this without the risk of clamping down on the item







If your saliva or dry mouth is causing severe problems your GP may be able to prescribe medication to help.

Managing Excess Thin Saliva

The suggestions below may help you to decrease the amount of thin saliva in your mouth:

Food and Drink

Some foods and drinks can anecdotally help reduce saliva production, you might try:

-  Please note that someone with reduced awareness or poor oral control should not be given chewing gum or food or sweets to suck as they present a risk of choking
-  Ginger (fresh, dried or tea)
-  Dark grape juice
-  Papaya juice
-  Sage (capsules, tea, tincture or powder)
-  Horseradish (capsules, tablets or powder)

- ✓ Fresh ginger
- ✓ Chewing gum can help stimulate the swallowing of your saliva

Posture

- ✓ Sit upright and in the middle of the chair
- ✓ Try to prevent your head from dropping forward into a chin to chest position as this will increase the likelihood of losing saliva from the front of your mouth

Routine

- ✓ Remind yourself to keep your mouth closed when you are reading, watching TV and relaxing
- ✓ If you experience saliva leaving your mouth, try to dab the area lightly to absorb the saliva and dry the skin, rubbing the area may encourage the production of more saliva and make your skin sore
- ✓ Using Vaseline or a barrier cream may be required at the corners of your mouth to prevent them becoming sore
- ✓ Complete regular 'dry swallows' (swallowing without food or fluids) to clear your mouth of saliva. The 'Swallow

Prompt' app can be used to remind you to swallow more frequently

- ✔ Ensure your mouth is as clean as possible, this will reduce the amount of bacteria in your mouth

If the above recommendations do not adequately manage your excess saliva, medication can potentially be used to reduce your saliva production, please speak to your GP regarding this or your Specialist Neurology Nurse

Accessibility

Patient information leaflets are available on our website:
www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/leaflets

Get in touch

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Feedback

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support to patients, families, and carers, helping to resolve any problems, concerns, or complaints you may have.

Phone 0800 328 7971

Email PALS@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

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