



Building Better Oral Health Communities

Better Oral Health in Home Care

Relief of dry mouth



Government of South Australia
SA Health



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Disclaimer

While every effort was made to ensure the information was accurate and up to date at the time of production, some information may become superseded as future research and new oral hygiene products are developed. In addition, the information in this resource is not intended as a substitute for a health professional's advice in relation to any oral health issues of concern.

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Relief of dry mouth

Saliva is important to maintain a healthy mouth. When the quantity and quality of saliva is reduced, oral diseases can develop very quickly. Reduced saliva flow is known as dry mouth. This is a common and uncomfortable condition for older people. Many of the medications taken by older people contribute to dry mouth. Dry mouth can also affect a person's ability to speak, chew and swallow food comfortably.



Better oral health in home care

Encourage and support clients to:

- keep their mouth moist by sipping plain tap water
- limit sugary food or drinks, juice, tea, coffee and alcohol
- avoid foods that are dry or salty or spicy
- use a water-based lip moisturiser
- ask the dentist or pharmacist about dry mouth products.

This is important because:

- keeping the mouth and lips moist provides relief
- limiting foods and drinks that contribute to dry mouth helps relieve discomfort
- dry mouth products provide saliva support.

Dry mouth products



A dry mouth product best suited to the client can be recommended by a dental professional or pharmacist.

Apply the dry mouth product according to the manufacturer guidelines to teeth, gums, inside of the cheeks, roof of the mouth and the fitting surface of dentures.

Dry mouth products are especially useful before bed, upon awakening and before eating.

Increase saliva flow



If appropriate, chewing sugar free gum can be used to stimulate saliva flow.

Foods labelled 'no added sugar' or 'sugar free' do not necessarily mean they are tooth friendly.

Products made with xylitol (a sugar substitute) as well as products carrying the 'happy tooth' symbol are recommended.

Keep mouth moist



Encourage the client to sip water frequently especially after meals, medications, other drinks and snacks.

Limit food and drinks that contribute to dry mouth such as sugary food or drinks, juice, tea, coffee and alcohol.

Recommend caffeine free tea or coffee.

Avoid foods that are dry or salty or spicy.

Avoid mouth washes containing alcohol.

Keep lips moist



A water-based lip moisturiser can be used as often as needed.

Caution
Petroleum-based lip moisturises may increase the risk of inflammation and aspiration pneumonia and are contraindicated during oxygen therapy.

