

ALDRICH DENTAL CARE

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Xerostomia: Dry Mouth Syndrome

Xerostomia (dry mouth) is not a condition everyone should expect. You may notice it as you age due to a change in hormones, medication, and/or radiation therapy in the head and neck region.

Why Xerostomia Is a Problem

Saliva is important to oral health for several reasons. The flow of saliva helps clear debris from the oral cavity. It provides minerals necessary to support the process of remineralization. Tooth enamel daily undergoes acid attack that removes inorganic minerals from teeth. This is called demineralization. Remineralization is the opposite of demineralization. It occurs when inorganic molecules flow into a region of weakened enamel and make it stronger.

When the salivary flow is reduced, a chain of events occurs. The natural cleansing action is diminished, as are the buffering action and remineralization properties of saliva. People with diminished salivary flow experience a very fast rate of decay, many times faster and over several teeth. This type of dental decay is typically noted along the gumline, around existing dental work, and on exposed root surfaces.

Prevention

You can help prevent dental decay that can result from xerostomia.

- Brushing and flossing correctly at least once each day becomes very important.
- Frequent sips of water during the day can help moisten the mouth and can help clear debris.
- Daily use of a mouthrinse containing fluoride can help remineralize the teeth.
- Use a toothpaste containing sodium fluoride.
- We recommend a daily brushing with a prescription, high-concentration sodium fluoride gel or paste. We will either dispense this or give you a prescription for it.
- Chew sugarless gum or a rubber band to help stimulate salivary flow.
- In moderate to severe cases, special fluoride delivery trays can be made for you to use at home. These will keep the high-concentration fluoride in a position to “soak” your teeth with fluoride for several minutes at a time.
- We recommend that you have your teeth cleaned, polished, and an office-applied topical fluoride treatment every 3 months while the condition persists.
- We recommend Biotene® tooth paste, Biotene® mouthwash, and Biotene® Oral Balance and you can find these products everywhere you would normally shop for dental products.

Dry mouth can have serious dental consequences and must be treated accordingly.

If you have any questions about xerostomia, please feel free to ask us.