



Mouth and Dental Care

Key Points

- Drug therapy can cause dry mouth (xerostomia) and mouth/throat irritation or sores.
- Do not smoke, use tobacco products, or drink alcohol – all can cause mouth problems. Do not use mouthwash that contains alcohol.
- If you have a dry mouth, try artificial saliva and sugarless candy/gum. Avoid very salty and very sweet foods.

Treatment may have left your mouth dry, tender, irritated, and more likely to get sores or infection. You may be more sensitive to hot or cold foods, have changes in your sense of taste, or have a bad or metallic taste in your mouth.

Prevention Tips

- ✓ Talk to your doctor about how often you should have dental check-ups. Ask your dentist about fluoride treatments.
- ✓ Keep your mouth as clean and moist as possible. A dry mouth, called xerostomia, increases your risk of infection and tooth decay, and it is uncomfortable.
- ✓ Lips: Use a moisturizer or balm that is water soluble (dissolves in water). Avoid products that contain glycerin or petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) - they will dry out your lips.
- ✓ Dentures: Clean them twice a day. If they feel loose, call your dentist to have them refit.
- ✓ Do not smoke, use tobacco products, or drink alcohol – all are hard on tissues in your mouth.
- ✓ Regularly check your mouth and look for sores or white patches.
- ✓ Avoid acidic, spicy, and hot foods. **Did you know that carbonated beverages are acidic?**
- ✓ Drink lots of water 2-3 quarts (4 cups = 1 quart) every day, unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids. Keep a water bottle with you to remind you to drink.

Baking Soda Rinse

½ teaspoon of baking soda
mixed in 8 ounces of
warm water

How to Take Care of Your Mouth

After meals and at bedtime:

- ✓ **Brush** with a soft toothbrush (run your brush under warm water to make it softer) and a nonabrasive fluoride toothpaste.
- ✓ **Rinse** your mouth for 30-60 seconds with either a baking soda rinse or a fluoride mouthwash. **Do not use mouthwashes or rinses that contain alcohol.** They can cause dry mouth and irritation. Rinse at least 4 times a day – more often if your mouth is sore or you have thick mucus.
- ✓ **Floss** gently with unwaxed floss unless your doctor or nurse tells you not to floss. (If your platelet count gets too low, you may be asked to stop flossing for a short time.)

Tips for Dry Mouth

- ✓ Increase your baking soda mouth rinses to every 2 hours while you are awake.
- ✓ Try a few dry mouth products to see what works for you. Examples: Biotene® Dry Mouth Oral Rinse, Lubricity™ Dry Mouth Spray, Xylimelts® (xylitol product), and Oralbalance® gel. **Avoid all mouthwashes that contain alcohol or hydrogen peroxide.**
- ✓ Use artificial saliva (also called saliva substitutes). You'll find it with other mouth care products.
- ✓ Suck on sugarless hard candies or chew sugarless gum.
- ✓ Try acupuncture.
- ✓ Avoid foods that have a high salt or sugar content.

If you snore or breathe through your mouth, you are more likely to have a dry mouth.

Tips for Mouth Sores or Discomfort

- ✓ Increase your use of the baking soda rinse to every 2 hours while you are awake.
- ✓ Do not eat or drink citrus or spicy foods and liquids.
- ✓ Use a straw. (May allow you to drink with less discomfort)
- ✓ Remove dentures or partial plates and leave them out as much as you can. Soak them in cleaning solution for 8 hours. If they're getting loose, let your dentist know you need them refitted.
- ✓ If you are using gels to help with mouth pain, know they may make it difficult to swallow and raise the risk of choking.
- ✓ Do not use glycerin or lemon glycerin swabs. They dry out your mouth.
- ✓ Take pain medicine before you eat.