

How Seasonal Allergies Can Affect Your Oral Health

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When allergy season is in full swing, your dental health may not be on the top of your mind. But a case of hay fever can make an impact on your teeth and gums. Here's what to look out for and how to protect your mouth.

Tooth pain

Sinus pain is a common symptom of your [immune system](#) waging war on pollen and dust. The hollow spaces in your head fill up with mucus, causing aches and pains in your face. The maxillary sinuses, the largest sinuses in your face, are located above your mouth. When pressure builds in these sinuses, it can push down on the roots of your upper molars. You may experience sensitivity to hot and cold or notice pain that shifts as you sit, stand or lie down.

Try antihistamines to see if you can get any relief. If your toothache goes away after taking antihistamines, the tooth is likely allergy-related. But if it persists after your allergy symptoms disappear, or occurs somewhere other than your upper molars, talk to your dentist. The pain may be caused by decay.

Dry mouth

Allergies can cause dry mouth in two ways. First, you're more likely to breathe through your mouth when your nose is stuffy. Second, many antihistamines include dry mouth as a side effect. This condition isn't just uncomfortable — it also increases your chances of developing cavities, gum disease and bad breath. One of the main functions of saliva is to wash away harmful bacteria. That means a dry mouth is the perfect place for cavity-causing bacteria to multiply.

Sore throat

An irritated sore throat is a common result of allergies, caused by postnasal drip. This sore throat can cause bad breath, but since it originates in the throat, brushing your teeth won't do much to help.

What to do

Follow these tips to keep your dental health in check.

- **Stay hydrated.** Drink lots of water to keep your mouth and body hydrated. Not only can this counteract the effects of dry mouth, it can also help your body flush away the excess mucus.
- **Gargle with salt water.** Dissolve a tablespoon of salt water in a glass of warm water. Gargle and spit until all the water is gone. The salt can help draw mucus out of your sinuses, relieving your symptoms. It also cuts down on harmful bacteria in your mouth and throat, reducing the effects of bad breath and plaque.
- **Keep brushing and flossing.** A serious attack of allergies is no excuse to slack on your oral health routine. Regular brushing and flossing are especially

important when you're experiencing dry mouth, so make sure you're brushing twice and flossing at least once a day.

- **Treat your allergies.** Controlling your allergies can help reduce their impact on your mouth. Avoid known triggers, and talk to your doctor about long-term treatment options, such as prescription medication or allergy shots.
- **Talk to your dentist.** Continue going to scheduled dental appointments. If you're experiencing tooth pain, mention it to your dentist. Your dentist can help you figure out whether it's allergy-related or caused by other problems.