

Writing Samples

Originally composed for wiseGEEK.com; factual and encyclopedic in style

What is the Treatment for a Salivary Gland Infection?

<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-the-treatment-for-a-salivary-gland-infection.htm>

A salivary gland infection may be viral or bacterial. Most cases do not require treatment, and regular tooth brushing, proper hygiene habits, and home remedies are generally enough to ease symptoms and eliminate the infection. Cases of salivary gland infection in which treatment is necessary will usually involve pus or fever. Antibiotics are often an effective prescription for bacterial infections, while most viral infections heal on their own. In some cases, an abscess may form that may need to be drained, but severe complications are rare.

Most cases of salivary gland infection heal on their own. Proper dental hygiene habits are essential not only in controlling the infection, but also in preventing new ones in the long run. Individuals are best off brushing regularly, around twice a day, and flossing regularly as well. Those who smoke are generally recommended to quit, at least until the infection has subsided, as smoking may stunt the healing process.

Home remedies can also help to ease symptoms and speed recovery from a salivary gland infection. Rinsing one's mouth with a salt water solution, approximately 1/2 teaspoon (2 ml) per 1 cup (225 ml) of water, can help to alleviate the pain of the infection and keep the area clean. Massaging or heating the area of the salivary gland, such as by using a warm compress, can also help to lighten pain and bring down swelling. Individuals afflicted by salivary gland infection should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration and keep their immune systems strong and the area of their salivary glands moist. Sucking candies, especially sour ones, or anything that will stimulate saliva production help to keep salivary pathways open and aid in reducing swelling.

If the infection does not respond to home treatments or is severe enough to stimulate pus or fever, additional treatment may be required. Generally, these types of infections tend to be bacterial, and such cases can be treated effectively with antibiotics prescribed by a physician. Viral infections do not respond to antibiotics, but in most cases, proper rest supplemented by over-the-counter medications to relieve pain and fever will be enough to control the infection.

Certain cases of salivary gland infection may lead to the formation of an abscess, which, under severe circumstances, poses the danger of rupturing the external auditory canal or spreading through the skin of the cheek or neck. An abscess of the salivary gland is best treated through surgical incision and drainage by a physician. As with any other abscess, the operation involves cutting open the area in order to drain the pus. After emptied, the physician will generally wash the area with a sterilized saline solution and stitch it closed. The healing process is generally much quicker after this point.