

Dry mouth

A dry mouth is rarely a sign of anything serious. There are things you can do to help ease it yourself.

Contact your GP if these do not work or you also have other symptoms.

Causes of a dry mouth

The main causes of a dry mouth are:

- [dehydration](#) - for example, from not drinking enough, sweating a lot or being ill
- medicines - check the leaflet that comes with your medicine to see if dry mouth is a side effect
- breathing through your mouth at night - this can happen if you have a blocked nose or you sleep with your mouth open
- [anxiety](#)
- cancer treatment - radiotherapy or chemotherapy

If a dry mouth does not go away, it might be caused by a condition like diabetes or Sjögren's syndrome.

How to help ease a dry mouth

Do

- ✓ drink plenty of water - take regular sips during the day and keep some water by your bed at night
- ✓ suck on ice cubes or ice lollies
- ✓ chew sugar-free gum or suck on sugar-free sweets
- ✓ use lip balm if your lips are also dry
- ✓ brush your teeth twice a day and use alcohol-free mouthwash - you're more likely to get tooth decay if you have a dry mouth

Don't

- ✗ do not drink lots of alcohol, caffeine (such as tea and coffee) or fizzy drinks
- ✗ do not have foods that are acidic (like lemons), spicy, salty or sugary
- ✗ do not smoke or vape
- ✗ do not stop taking a prescribed medicine without getting medical advice first - even if you think it might be causing your symptoms

A pharmacist can help if you have a dry mouth

Ask a pharmacist about treatments you can buy to help keep your mouth moist.

You can get:

- gels
- sprays
- tablets
- lozenges

Not all products are suitable for everyone. Ask a pharmacist for advice about the best one for you.

If your dry mouth might be caused by a blocked nose, a pharmacist may suggest decongestants to unblock it.

Contact a GP if:

- your mouth is still dry after trying home or pharmacy treatments for a few weeks
- you have difficulty chewing, swallowing or talking
- your mouth is painful, red or swollen
- you have sore white patches in your mouth
- you have any patches that do not heal
- you think a prescribed medicine might be causing your dry mouth
- you have other symptoms, like needing to pee a lot or dry eyes

They can check what the cause might be and recommend treatment for it.

Sláintecare.

This project has received funding from the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019 under Grant Agreement Number 123.

Page last reviewed: 1 July 2024

Next review due: 1 July 2027

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