

Dry Mouth or Thick Saliva

Your mouth can become dry from radiation therapy, some types of chemotherapy, and some medications. The saliva glands can become irritated and produce less saliva, or your saliva can become very thick, sticky, or stringy.

Mild dryness can be managed with drinking more water and fluids. More severe dryness can cause problems with eating, talking, and sleeping. Managing dry mouth is important to reduce your risk for dental cavities, gum disease, or mouth infections, so see your dentist regularly.

Tips:

- **Fluids:** Drink 8 to 10 cups of fluids a day, and take a water bottle with you when you leave home. Sip water between bites during meals. Drinking lots of fluids throughout the day helps loosen sticky secretions.
- **Dental care:** Keep your mouth clean and your lips moist. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush and floss regularly. Rinse your mouth before and after meals with plain water or a mild mouth rinse (1 quart water, $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon baking soda).
- **Foods:** Choose soft, bland foods that are at room temperature or cold. Try blenderized fruits and vegetables; beef, chicken, or fish cooked until very tender; and well-thinned cereals.
- **Add** broth, soup, sauces, gravy, butter, or margarine to moisten foods. Dip or soak dry food in whatever you are drinking to soften.
- **Try** sugarless gum or suck on sugarless candy to stimulate saliva. Citrus-flavored candies such as lemon drops often work best.
- **Very** sour or sweet beverages, such as lemonade or cranberry juice, might help thin thick saliva secretions, but don't overdo it because sugary or acidic foods and drinks increase risk of tooth decay. Avoid acidic foods and beverages if you have a sore or tender mouth. Eating papaya can help break up thick, "ropy" saliva.
- **Limit** beverages with caffeine, such as coffee, tea, and colas, because caffeine can cause added dryness. Chocolate also contains caffeine.
- **Quit** smoking and chewing tobacco, and limit drinking alcoholic beverages, as these can make the dryness worse.

COOLING EFFECTS

Cold foods and beverages can be soothing.

Try freezing fruit such as:

- Whole grapes
- Banana pieces
- Melon balls
- Peach slices
- Mandarin orange slices



Suck on frozen fruit pops, fruit ices, slushes, ice chips, or other cold foods.

Use a cool-mist humidifier to moisten room air, especially at night. Be sure to keep the humidifier clean to avoid spreading bacteria or mold in the air.



Product Hints:

You do not need a prescription for items recommended in this section. Many drugstores keep them behind the pharmacist’s counter, so ask for assistance if you don’t find what you’re looking for. Your dentist might also offer some guidance on products appropriate for your symptoms. Ask your provider about prescription products if you are not achieving enough relief.

- Avoid **mouthwashes** containing alcohol, which can make dryness worse.
- Try Biotene alcohol-free mouthwash, and keep the spray handy while you’re away from home. Biotene also makes a toothpaste.
- The Oralbalance **gel** might provide longer-lasting relief. Keep it handy on your nightstand if you awaken in the middle of the night with dry mouth.
- **Oral moisturizers** act to seal in moisture in your mouth. See the list of suggestions below, or ask your pharmacist for recommendations.
- **Saliva substitutes** are helpful if your salivary glands have been removed by surgery or damaged by radiation. These products can be used with oral moisturizers. Your pharmacy might carry Xero-lube, Gladosane, or Salivart saliva substitutes.
- **Nutritional supplements**, such as liquid meal replacements, can be helpful during this time. Your dietitian will have samples and suggestions.
- Use **lip balm** to keep your lips moist. Balms containing Vitamin E might also be helpful.
- Look for sugar-free gums and mints sweetened with **xylitol**. This natural sweetener interferes with the growth of bacteria known to cause tooth decay. Consuming too much xylitol can cause diarrhea.

Oral Moisturizers and Saliva Substitutes	Mints and Mouthwashes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biotene Moisturizing Spray Biotene Oralbalance Moisturizing Gel DenTek OraMoist Time-Released Patch Mouth Kote Spray Oasis Moisturizing Mouth Spray Stoppers 4 Dry Mouth Spray 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACT Total Care Dry Mouth Mouthwash Biotene Dry Mouth Oral Rinse Oasis Moisturizing Mouthwash Oracoat XyliMelts Spry Xylitol Mints TheraBreath Dry Mouth Lozenges

Infused flavored water – make it by the glass, or keep a pitcher chilled in the refrigerator.

1. Select your flavors from apple, blackberry, blueberry, cantaloupe, cucumber, grape, honeydew, lemon, lime, mango, orange, papaya, peach, pear, pineapple, raspberry, strawberry, or watermelon. You can add ginger (might help with mild nausea) or mint, whatever combination sounds good to you!
2. Muddle or smash ingredients a little with a wooden spoon.
3. Add plain or sparkling water.