

Autoimmune Resource & Research Centre ARRC



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Tips for Relieving Dry Mouth and Eyes

Sjören's Syndrome affects the salivary glands and may produce dryness of the eyes and mouth resulting in considerable discomfort.

Many non-prescription drugs, also anti-depressants and anti-histamines can cause similar symptoms, as can diabetes, viral infections, allergy to eye solutions and anxiety.

Suggestions to relieve dryness of the mouth and to help keep the soft tissues in good condition are:

- Take frequent sips of water or mineral water without sugar.
- Chew sugarless gum. The chewing may help to stimulate saliva production.
- Suck sugarless sweets. (Be cautious with sugarless products containing sorbitol as this may contribute to abdominal bloating and discomfort if used to excess.)
- Suck on a small piece of lemon rind or a cherry pit. The sucking action may help to stimulate saliva production.
- Keep a glass or jug of water by your bed for drinking during the night or when you wake up.
- Drink frequently while eating. This will make chewing and swallowing easier and may improve the taste of foods.
- Avoid caffeine-containing coffee and tea. Many people report increased dryness after drinking caffeinated beverages.
- Avoid tobacco. Mouth washes and toothpastes containing alcohol will further aggravate dryness. Saliva replacements and oral care products such as those produced by Biotene may be helpful.

Suggestions to look after your teeth:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day.
- Use dental floss between the teeth at least daily.
- Use toothpaste containing fluoride and consult with your dentist concerning the use of topical fluoride.
- See your dentist at least three times a year for cleaning and for early treatment of any cavities. If the amount of saliva in your mouth is decreased, there may be an increase in dental decay.
- Avoid sticky, sugary foods or brush immediately after eating.

Suggestions for relieving discomfort caused by dry eyes:

- Protective sunglasses (such as the wrap around ones available from the Cancer Council) can help shield eyes from irritating dust, wind and strong light.
- Artificial tears can provide relief but must be used regularly.
- The use of contact lenses may need to be discontinued.
- A humidifier used at home may help to ease discomfort associated with dry atmospheric conditions.

Updated by: Rachel Rossiter
Reviewed Date: 19th July 2007

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