

## Could A Dry Mouth Lead to Tooth Decay?

**Dry mouth** occurs when the saliva glands stop producing enough saliva. Dry mouth is a very common problem as it can be caused by stress. It's very important to go to your dentist or doctor if you have a constant dry mouth as it can be a sign of other diseases.

Saliva plays a vital role for many reasons. It helps us to talk, chew, taste, swallow and digest our food. Saliva controls the bacteria in our mouths so lack of it would increase the likelihood of infection. Saliva also protects our teeth from decay, so having a dry mouth can cause many complications.

**Causes** of dry mouth are:

- A side effect of other medication such as diuretics, antihistamines, antidepressants and muscle relaxants.
- Stress.
- Alcohol abuse.
- Depression.
- Cancer treatment such as radiation therapy and chemotherapy.
- Nerve damage.
- Rheumatoid conditions.
- Hormonal disorders such as diabetes.
- Neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease.
- Dysfunctional immune system such as AIDS.

**Treatment** of dry mouth depends on the cause; doing the following will help if you suffer from dry mouth...

- If the cause of your dry mouth is a side effect of medication then alternative drugs may be prescribed or a lower dosage.
- Cevimeline or pilocarpine may be prescribed to stimulate saliva production.
- Use a humidifier.
- Chew sugar free gum or suck on sugar free sweets.
- Don't smoke tobacco or drink alcohol.
- Breathe through your nose and not your mouth as much as possible.
- Use a tongue scraper.
- Brush and floss thoroughly and regularly to avoid a buildup of plaque which leads to tooth decay.

It is important you see your dentist regularly if you have dry mouth as tooth decay is far more likely to occur if there is no saliva to control the bacteria in the mouth.

# Healthy Tips



## **Walk 10 Minutes a Day and Increase Your Fitness Level**

Old thinking was to work out in a sweat-filled gym for hours a day. No pain, no gain. New studies show that even short bouts of activity can increase your fitness level, especially if you're new at working out.