

Sjögren's Syndrome Information Guide

Sjögren's syndrome is an immune system disorder that most commonly affects the eyes and mouth, secreting the glands in your mouth and eyes, decreasing your tears and saliva output.

Although you can develop Sjögren's syndrome at any age, most people are not diagnosed until they are 40 years of age, most commonly found in women Sjögren's syndrome is a disorder that can't be treated and only maintained.

Living with dry mouth can be difficult but one thing that can't be stressed enough, having regular dental cleaning appointments and check ups with your dental professional. Dry mouth can cause tooth decay and having regular cleanings will help to insure oral hygiene is achieved. Saliva isn't just to keep your tongue and gums moist, most people don't know that saliva actually coats your teeth in a protective mineral that helps in the prevention and slowing down of cavities.

Things to help make your dental visits easier as a dry mouth patient, ask your doctor to be your partner in your disorder.

- Inform the dental team of your diagnosis
- Ask to take control of the suction, to use only when you need it or come up with a sign at the start of the appointment to inform the team you need suction.
- Bring sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- Carry a throat spray with you.
- Get a sufficient amount of rest before your appointment in order to cope better with treatment.

Ways Sjögren's syndrome can affect the body:

- Dry eyes cause considerable discomfort and can lead to corneal ulcers if not treated.
- Dry mouth can affect nutrition and diet.
- Severe dry mouth can lead to dysphagia, with food sticking to the esophagus.

- Neurological problems including impaired memory and concentration.

Causes of dry mouth:

- Excess caffeine consumption.
- Prescription medications.
- Medical Treatment (Head and neck radiation therapy, bone marrow transplants, chemotherapy).
- Smoking.
- Mouth Breathing.
- Chronic conditions such as (Diabetes, Depression, Hepatitis C, HIV).

Indications that you may have dry mouth:

- Pain or discomfort when swallowing.
- Constant sipping of liquids.
- Increased tooth decay.
- Speech impairment.
- Altered taste.
- Cracking at the corner of the lips.

Solutions for maintaining dry mouth:

- Eat smaller and more often to increase saliva flow.
- Increase the intake of fluids (water).
- Talk to your family doctor about medications that may cause dry mouth and possible alternatives.
- Stop smoking.
 - Chew sugar free gum, candies, fruit pits or lemon rinds to increase saliva flow.

Products to help with dry mouth symptoms:

- Remin fluoride free toothpaste.
- Xylitol in time-release adhering pastilles indicated against dry mouth.
- Gum and Pastilles gum and mints indicated against dry mouth.
- High strength sodium fluoride rinse with 10% xylitol.

All of the above products are available at shoppers drug mart or london drugs.

Instructions on how to massage salivary glands:

https://www.sjogrens.org/files/brochures/Salivary_Glands_Massage.pdf

For more information on Sjögren's syndrome and more tips on how to maintain this disorder please visit www.sjogrenscanada.org or call 1-888-558-0950.