

Dental instruction for Xerostomia patients



Key Points

1. Severity of xerostomia or dry mouth symptoms ranges from mild oral discomfort to significant oral disease that can compromise the patient's health, dietary intake, and quality of life.
2. Causes of dry mouth can include toxicity from chemotherapy, head and neck radiotherapy, medication intake, autoimmune diseases (e.g., Sjogren disease) or other conditions (e.g., uncontrolled diabetes, infections, hormonal changes).
3. Reduced salivary flow can cause difficulties in tasting, chewing, swallowing, and speaking; it can also increase the chance of developing dental caries, demineralization of teeth, tooth sensitivity, and/or oral infections.
4. The goals of treating xerostomia include identifying the possible cause(s), relieving discomfort, and preventing complications (e.g., dental caries and periodontal infections).

Management of xerostomia and hyposalivation should emphasize patient education and lifestyle modifications.

1. sipping water or sugarless, caffeine-free drinks,
2. sucking on ice chips

3. using lip lubricants frequently (e.g., every two hours)
4. chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free candy
5. avoiding salty or spicy food or dry, hard-to-chew foods
6. avoiding sticky, sugary foods
7. avoiding irritants such as alcohol (including alcohol-containing mouth rinses), tobacco, and caffeine
8. drinking fluids while eating carefully
9. using a humidifier at night



Dental and oral health-specific recommendations include the following for patients with dry mouth:

- brush teeth gently at least twice a day with fluoridated toothpaste/floss teeth every day
- schedule dental visits at least twice a year (with yearly bitewing radiographs)
- use of a prescription-strength fluoride gel (0.4% stannous fluoride, 1.1% sodium fluoride) daily to help prevent dental decay
- prompt treatment of oral fungal or bacterial infections
- application of 0.5% fluoride varnish to teeth
- dental soft- and hard-tissue relines of poorly fitting prostheses and use of denture adhesives