



Newsletter Articles

Why is dry mouth so bad for teeth?



Why is Dry Mouth So Bad for Teeth?

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Ever had really bad nasal congestion? A blocked nose, sinus issues, or clogged ears? When you can't breathe through your nose, you resort to mouth breathing for days.

How does your mouth feel then? Not great, we suspect. Food and plaque stick to your teeth, your lips, cheeks, and gums dry out, and everything feels off.

Now, imagine dealing with this all the time without making the necessary changes to improve it.

What long-term damage can occur from ongoing dry mouth?

Let's first give praise to saliva. Your spit is truly amazing. It lubricates your mouth, kickstarts digestion, repairs and remineralises your teeth, and protects against harmful bacteria and germs. It even enhances the taste of food by spreading flavours to your taste buds. If saliva is missing or of poor quality, things quickly deteriorate.

Your saliva is your number one ally in achieving excellent oral health. But that doesn't mean you can indulge in junk food, guzzle cola, and skip brushing. However, it does help mitigate the effects of many dental sins.

With a dry mouth, more debris adheres to your teeth, demanding a superior brushing technique and meticulous cleaning between teeth (like flossing and interdental brushing). Compromising on cleaning isn't an option. Sorry, not sorry.

We often stress the importance of creating and maintaining an ideal oral environment. Your teeth and gums need moisture, protection from acidic attacks, minimal bacterial plaque build-up, and nourishment. Think of it like cultivating a carefully curated garden, complete with waterfalls and streams.

If your mouth resembles a harsh, dry desert, things start cracking and falling apart rapidly. All the nourishment and lubrication your mouth requires disappear. Once the sheriff leaves town, the bad guys take over. Nasty bacteria thrive, food particles and plaque cling to your teeth, and there's no natural defence against acidic drinks that dissolve teeth and inflame gums.

The primary causes of dry mouth include:

1. **Dehydration:** Not drinking enough water. It's that simple. Physical activity and sweating require you to replenish more than you lose.
2. **Dry and Dusty Environments:** Working conditions or physical activities that involve prolonged mouth breathing in dry, dusty settings.
3. **Substance:** Caffeine, smoking, alcohol, and illicit drugs—all the fun stuff.
4. **Medications:** A significant issue, especially as we age. Many prescription drugs reduce saliva production, even with increased water intake.
5. **Asthma Medication:** Inhalers can leave residues on teeth, so thorough rinsing with water is essential.

6. **Mouth Breathing:** Due to nasal obstructions or tooth misalignment over extended periods.

7. **Saliva Gland Issues:** Conditions like Sjogren's syndrome or damage from head and neck radiation.

8. **Ageing:** As we get older, saliva production decreases.

So, what can you do about it? Presuming trashing your teeth isn't an option.

At Amelo, we discuss the two biggest negative influences on your dental health: IDK (I don't know) and CBF (can't be bothered).

From the above list, consider what you can influence to boost your natural saliva flow. Identify factors beyond your control or with limited influence. Determine additional steps to safeguard your oral health if returning to an ideal, balanced saliva flow isn't feasible.

Just as you apply sunscreen when out in the sun or protect a coastal home from corrosion, here are practical steps:

1. **Dehydration:** Increase hydration with plain water matching your activity level. Clear urine indicates good hydration. Beer, wine, coffee, and caffeine energy drinks aren't hydrating—enjoy responsibly. Use a straw with sports drinks to protect teeth from acidity. Sip water regularly throughout the day—it's free from the tap.

2. **Work Environment:** Manage air quality and adjust work conditions where possible.

3. **Substances:** Limit caffeine, smoking, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

4. **Medications:** Regularly review medications with a healthcare professional. Explore alternatives if dry mouth persists despite adequate hydration.

5. **Asthma Medication:** Rinse thoroughly with water after using inhalers.

6. **Mouth Breathing:** Seek advice from ENT specialists or orthodontists to address nasal obstructions or tooth misalignment.

7. **Saliva Gland Issues:** While damage is often irreversible, strict dental care—including regular water sipping, dry mouth gels, reduced sugar and acid intake, and quality fluoride products—can help. Use a straw with acidic and sugary drinks.

8. **Ageing:** Maintain proactive dental care and adhere to dietary, medication, lifestyle, and hydration guidelines.

