



Senior Care

LIBERTY cares about more than just teeth!

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth (Xerostomia) is common as we age.

Dry mouth is due to a decrease in saliva flow. Constant dry mouth can make chewing, swallowing, and even talking difficult. Dry mouth also increases the risk for tooth decay or fungal infections in the mouth. This is because saliva helps keep harmful germs in check.

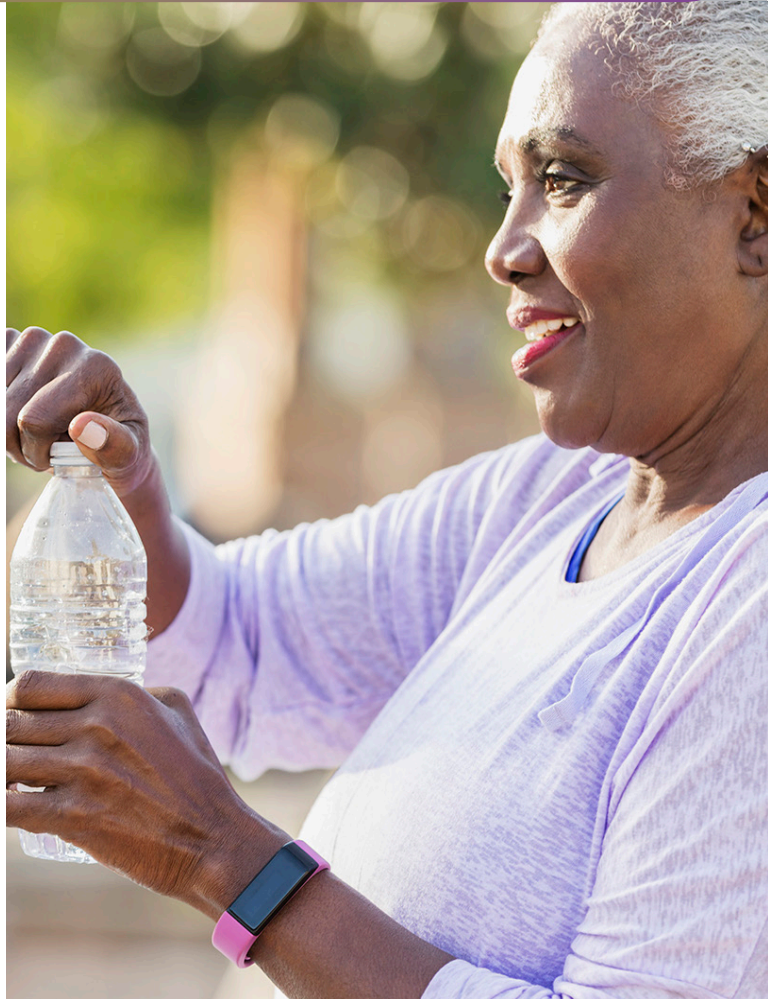
Dry mouth is not a normal part of aging. If you think you have dry mouth, see your dentist or doctor to find out why your mouth is dry.

Signs and symptoms of dry mouth:

Along with the feeling of having a dry mouth, you may also find you have dry lips and cracking at the corner of your mouth. You may be thirsty during the night. You may also have tenderness or red bumps on your tongue. There may be a shiny red dry appearance to your gums and the inside of your cheeks.

The danger of dry mouth

With dry mouth, you have less saliva. This means you are not able to rinse away acids



and bacteria in the mouth. This can lead to a higher chance of dental decay. Many seniors have receding gums. The part of the tooth that is visible with gum recession is harder to clean. If food and plaque gather at the gum line and the mouth is dry, there is a higher chance of decay.

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Factors that can cause dry mouth:



Medications:

- Antihistamines
- Decongestants
- High Blood Pressure medications
- Sedatives
- Antidepressants
- Diuretics
- Pain medications

Medical Conditions:

- AIDS
- Parkinson's disease,
- Primary biliary cirrhosis
- Auto immune diseases - such as Lupus or Sjogren's syndrome
- Diabetes
- High blood Pressure



Dehydration:

- Not drinking enough fluids
- Blood loss
- Chronic diarrhea
- Kidney failure

Radiation treatments to the head and neck

Chemotherapy

Tips to avoid dry mouth



- **Avoid** sugary drinks like soda, processed juices, sweetened coffees, and teas
- **Limit** coffee, tea, and alcohol
- **Avoid** smoking



- Increase fluid intake by drinking more water and eating more fresh fruits and vegetables daily
- Use a soft bristled toothbrush to clean your teeth and gums at least three times every day



- Clean between your teeth with dental floss and or a brush for between teeth
- Make sure all food is removed at the gum line
- Use a non-alcohol fluoride rinse
- Use a saliva substitute, such as a mouth spray, rinse or lozenge, and apply lip moisturizer daily



- Suck on sugar-free hard candies or chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva flow, and try products with the sweetener Xylitol which helps to combat dental decay
- Visit your dentist at least twice a year for a professional cleaning, oral cancer exam and fluoride treatment