

# Speech & Language Therapy

## Saliva Management

Saliva is produced by glands in the front of our mouth. It helps us to speak and swallow, by lubricating our mouth. It also keeps our teeth and gums clean and helps us digest our food.

Certain conditions or types of medication can impact your ability to produce or control saliva. Your GP or specialist nurse can give you advice on whether any medicines can help you manage your saliva.

**The information below may help you to manage this yourself.**

### Excess saliva

Drooling is usually not due to over-production of saliva. It can be due to:

- Not realising when saliva is leaking onto your lips or chin.
- Not swallowing as often.
- Weaker lips.
- Not feeling when you are ready to swallow saliva in your mouth.
- Poor posture.

### Managing excess thin saliva

#### Habits:

- Try to swallow regularly. You could download a swallow reminder app, such as [www.speechtools.co/swallow-prompt](http://www.speechtools.co/swallow-prompt) on your smart phone or tablet.
- Suck your cheeks in and swallow any saliva that has built up.
- Avoid repetitive wiping of your chin as this may make it sore. Your nurse may be able to recommend a suitable barrier cream.

#### Posture:

- Sit as upright as possible.
- Swallow before changing position.
- Do not let your head bend forward.
- If possible, try lying on your side at night.
- Keep your mouth closed when watching TV.

#### Drinks:

Some drinks can help reduce saliva production:

- Dark grape juice.
- Ginger tea.
- Sage tea.

#### Lip-strengthening exercises:

Exercises to make your lip seal stronger may help to keep saliva within your mouth.

You should try and complete the exercises overleaf, several times a day. Consult with your speech and language therapist (SLT) for an individualised programme.

## Lip-strengthening exercises



## Thick, sticky saliva, and dry mouth

Always tell your GP if you have a new or persistent dry mouth.



### What can I do?

- Stay well hydrated. Aim to drink 1.5-2 litres of fluids per day.
- If you have no swallowing difficulties, suck on crushed ice to thin your saliva down.
- If safe to do so, chewing gum or sucking sugar-free sweets can help produce more saliva.
- Pineapple juice can break down thick saliva.
- Artificial saliva sprays/gels may be suitable.
- Steam inhalation can be useful. Discuss with your nurse or doctor. Avoid using with essential oils as these have a drying effect on your mouth and throat.
- Use a lip balm if your lips are dry.
- Your GP may need to check your medicines as some of these can cause dry mouth.



### What should I avoid?

- You may find that reducing intake of dairy products is helpful. Discuss with your dietitian/SLT if you have concerns that this will affect your nutrition.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks and alcohol. This includes certain mouthwashes which contain alcohol.
- Do not sleep with your dentures in.
- Do not smoke.
- Reduce your intake of fizzy drinks and acidic foods.

**If you have tried the above and your mouth is still dry, please seek advice from your GP.**

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## Keeping your mouth clean

- Brush your teeth twice a day, as tooth decay is more likely in those who experience a dry mouth.
- Ask your speech and language therapist for an Advanced Oral Healthcare Information leaflet for further guidance on completing and assisting with mouthcare.

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## For further help or information

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