

HIV/AIDS & ORAL DISEASE

Part 1: Dry Mouth

HIV/AIDS and Oral Health

- More than 90% of HIV-infected adults and children will have at least one oral manifestation during the course of the disease.
- Many of these problems arise because the person's immune system is weakened and less able to fight off infection.
- Some of the most common oral problems for people with HIV/AIDS include: oral warts, fever blisters, hairy leukoplakia, oral candidiasis (thrush), and aphthous ulcers, often called canker sores.
- People with HIV/AIDS may also experience dry mouth, which increases the risk of tooth decay and can make chewing, eating, swallowing, and even talking difficult.

Treatment

- Many of the common oral health problems associated with HIV can often be treated with over-the-counter or prescription medications.
- There are also self-care steps you can take to help ease dry mouth.
- Talk with your doctor or dentist about what treatment might work for you.

Dry Mouth

- Dry mouth happens when you do not have enough saliva, or spit, to keep your mouth wet. Saliva helps you chew and digest food, protects teeth from decay, and prevents infections by controlling bacteria and fungi in the mouth. Without enough saliva you could develop tooth decay or other infections and might have trouble chewing and swallowing. You might experience a sticky, dry, or burning sensation, and/or cracked/ chapped lips.

Dry Mouth Self-Care Steps:

- Brush thoroughly and carefully for two minutes after every meal and before bedtime.
- Prevent plaque buildup on teeth by using dental floss at least once a day
- Sip water or sugarless drinks often
- Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless hard candy
- Avoid tobacco
- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid salty foods
- Use a humidifier at night
- Talk to your doctor or dentist about prescribing artificial saliva, which may help keep your mouth moist.

**Remember,
with the right treatment,
your mouth can feel better.**

