

# Oral moisturizers

## Products that can help relieve dry mouth

**S**aliva coats and lubricates tissues in the mouth. It helps cleanse the mouth and begins the digestive process as you chew. Speaking, chewing and swallowing all are made easier when the mouth is moist. When saliva glands do not work properly, the mouth becomes dry.

Artificial saliva is a product that is used to help relieve dry mouth. It is available in an aerosol or a liquid that is squirted into the mouth.

### WHAT IS DRY MOUTH?

Dry mouth results from an inadequate flow of saliva. Drying irritates the soft tissues in the mouth, which can make them inflamed and more susceptible to infection. Severe dry mouth can promote the growth of harmful organisms. Without the cleansing and shielding effects of adequate salivary flow, caries (tooth decay) and periodontal (gum) disease become much more common. Constant dryness and the lack of protection provided by saliva contribute to bad breath. Dry mouth also causes full dentures to become less comfortable because there is no thin film of saliva to help them adhere properly to oral tissues.

### HOW DOES ARTIFICIAL SALIVA DIFFER FROM REAL SALIVA?

Artificial saliva is not a perfect substitute for natural saliva, which is complex physically and chemically. Although more than 99 percent of saliva is water, saliva also contains buffering agents, enzymes and minerals that keep teeth strong and play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy mouth. Artificial salivas typically contain a mixture of buffering agents, cellulose derivatives (to increase stickiness and moistening ability) and flavoring agents (such as sorbitol). However, they do not contain the digestive

and antibacterial enzymes and other proteins or minerals present in real saliva. Research is under way to try to develop artificial salivas that more closely mimic natural saliva.

Artificial saliva can be used as often as needed. Saliva substitutes are swallowed quickly and, therefore, the moistening and lubricating action has limited duration. Repeated applications may be needed. Although saliva substitutes will not cure dry mouth, they can provide temporary relief of some symptoms.

Artificial saliva does not require a prescription, but it may be difficult to find on store shelves. Check with your pharmacist if you don't see it displayed with other oral hygiene products.

### HOW DOES ARTIFICIAL SALIVA RECEIVE THE AMERICAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION SEAL OF ACCEPTANCE?

A company earns the American Dental Association (ADA) Seal of Acceptance for its product by producing scientific evidence that the product is

safe and effective. The Seal is your assurance that the artificial saliva has been evaluated by an independent body of scientific experts—the ADA Council on Scientific Affairs—for safety and effectiveness.

Look for the ADA Seal statement on the product's packaging or label. The statement explains why the ADA has given the Seal to the product. You also can be assured that all claims on packaging and con-

tainer labeling have been reviewed and approved by the ADA. Products with the prestigious ADA Seal must say what they do and do what they say.

For more information, visit "[www.ada.org/goto/seal](http://www.ada.org/goto/seal)". ■

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