



# CBR Prosthodontics

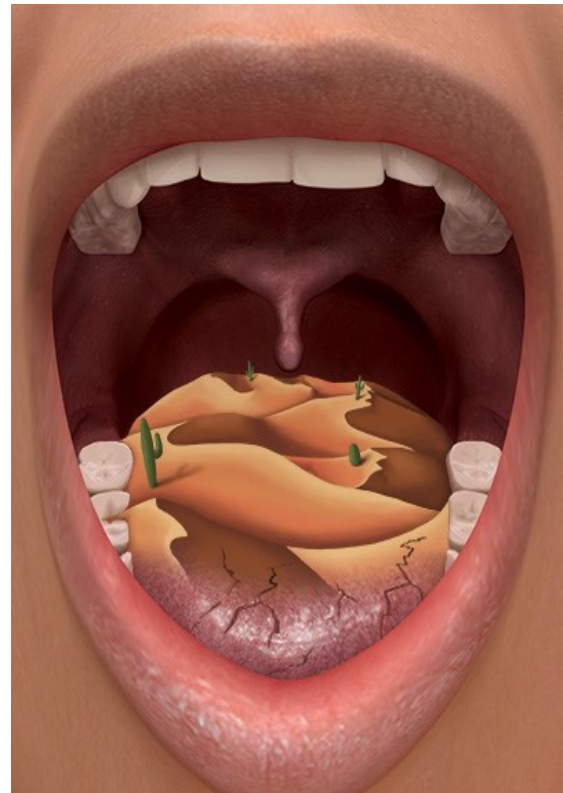
*specialist dental aesthetics and function*

## Dry Mouth

### What is Dry Mouth (Xerostomia)?

Dry mouth is the constant feeling that there is not enough saliva in your mouth. It may make talking and eating difficult. Denture wearers may have trouble keeping their dentures in place and they may develop ulcers from their dentures rubbing against the gum. Sufferers of severe dry mouth may experience a sore, burning mouth, blisters or ulcers and cracked lips.

Dry mouth is experienced by approximately 17-29% of adults. Often people do not notice a problem until their saliva flow has already decreased by 50%. Some of the symptoms of dry mouth are: sore mouth, stickiness to the touch, cracked lips, mouth looking red and parched, difficulty eating dry foods, difficulty speaking, feeling thirsty and bad breath.



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## What Causes Dry Mouth?

There are 4 main causes of dry mouth: medications, head and neck cancer and its treatment, certain diseases, and age.

**Medications:** over 400 frequently prescribed medications such as antidepressants, some beta-blockers, anti-hypertensives and diuretics have been associated with dry mouth. Also many over-the-counter medications such as cold and flu remedies, antihistamines and decongestants can cause dry mouth. The more medications you are taking the more likely it is that you will suffer from dry mouth.

**Head and neck cancer and its treatment:** radiotherapy for head and neck cancer causes the most damage to the salivary glands and may cause saliva flow to reduce by up to 95% in the first week and cease entirely within five weeks of treatment. Most studies show that saliva flow does not return after treatment has ceased. Chemotherapy also affects saliva flow but studies show that the effects are relatively short-lived.

**Certain diseases:** such as Sjogren's syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, sarcoidosis and diabetes can have an effect on the salivary glands.

**Age:** a slightly decreased saliva flow is a natural part of aging but is often worsened by the increased use of many medications.

## The Effects of Dry Mouth on the Teeth and Mouth

Saliva provides natural protection to the teeth from decay. As saliva flow reduces, the teeth become far more prone to decay. Those suffering from dry mouth must be much more diligent with their oral hygiene to avoid a rapid decline in their dental health.

## Treatments

There is no cure for dry mouth but there are a few things you can do to improve the situation:

- \* Sip water regularly throughout the day
- \* Avoid drinks that dry the mouth (caffeinated drinks and alcohol)
- \* Chew sugar-free gums or lollies to stimulate saliva flow
- \* Avoid smoking

There are also products on the market that can help you to manage your dry mouth symptoms, and our clinicians may also recommend other products.

**If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact us**

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