

## Care for a Dry Mouth after a Stroke

### Do you have dry mouth?

Do you have a burning sensation on your tongue? Do you have cracked lips or cracked lip corners? Does food taste different? Do you have trouble eating, especially dry foods? Do you often feel thirsty? If you have answered yes to any of the above, you may have dry mouth?

### What causes dry mouth?

Dry mouth may be caused by several factors including

- medications (e.g., decongestants, antihypertensives, diuretics, antihistamines, and antidepressants),
- dehydration
- and radiation..

### Why should I be concerned about dry mouth?

Besides being uncomfortable, a dry mouth will accumulate more plaque. More plaque means a higher risk of cavities and gum disease. If you have a swallowing problem and bacteria from the mouth are aspirated, you may be at risk for developing an aspiration pneumonia.

### What should I do about a dry mouth?

It is important to establish a good plaque control program by brushing and flossing twice daily. This will help to prevent cavities and gum disease. Use a higher fluoride toothpaste (Colgate Prevident 5000 Plus) or a fluoride rinse (Oral B Fluoride Rinse) after oral care.

If you **do not** have a swallowing problem the following tips may help to keep your mouth moist.

- Stay well hydrated with frequent sips of water
- Chew sugarless gum
- Avoid tobacco, alcohol and high sugar foods
- Use a commercial saliva substitute.

If you have a **swallowing problem** and can not swish and spit out your saliva or a mouth rinse, then use a suctioning device during oral care. After cleaning the mouth, slightly dampen a swab with fluoride rinse and rub over the teeth. Suction to remove excess mouth rinse and saliva. The following tips may help to keep your mouth moist.

- Increase the humidity in your room
- Use a saliva substitute
- Discuss safe methods of oral care with your speech-language pathologist

**Remember a Dry Mouth is a serious health problem and it should be addressed as soon as possible to prevent cavities, gum disease and risk of aspiration pneumonia.**