We all get thirsty, but for some individuals, dry mouth can’t be fixed with a simple glass of water. Also known as Xerostomia, if this level of dry mouth is ignored, it can increase a person’s risk of gingivitis (gum disease), tooth decay and mouth infections.¹

**What causes dry mouth?**

Xerostomia occurs when saliva isn’t produced and the mouth gets dry and uncomfortable. Saliva washes away food and other debris, which helps prevent infection by controlling bacteria and fungi in the mouth.² It’s not a disease, but it can be a symptom of a medical condition or side effect of a medication,¹ including the following:

- Certain prescription and nonprescription drugs that are used to treat a wide variety of health issues like depression, anxiety and other psychological disorders, allergies and colds, asthma, epilepsy, hypertension, diarrhea, nausea and urinary incontinence.³
- A number of diseases such as Sjögren’s syndrome, HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer’s, diabetes, anemia, cystic fibrosis, rheumatoid arthritis, stroke and mumps.³
- Medical treatments such as surgical removal of the salivary glands, chemotherapy and damage to salivary glands from radiation to the head and neck.³
- Lifestyle behaviors like smoking, chewing tobacco and breathing with an open mouth can also cause dry mouth.³

**What does it feel like?²**

Symptoms are usually much more complicated than an intense thirst. They range from a sticky, dry or burning feeling in the mouth to trouble chewing, swallowing, tasting or talking. A person might also experience cracked lips and sores or infections inside the mouth or on the tongue.

**How is it treated?²**

There are a variety of ways to restore moisture to a dry mouth, including:

- Drinking plenty of water
- Using sugar-free candy or gum to stimulate saliva flow
- Replacing moisture with artificial saliva and oral rinses
- Breathing through your nose – not your mouth

How to take care of dry mouth will depend on what is causing the problem. So if you think you have dry mouth, see your dentist or doctor. He or she can try to determine what is causing your dry mouth and recommend the appropriate treatment.