How Dry Mouth can Affect Oral Health Discussed by Niskayuna Dentist by Gracie Nicholson

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We see an increasing number of patients at our practice who are reporting a problem with dry mouth. This condition is termed "xerostomia." Xerostomia is often attributed as a side effect of medications for illnesses such as high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, allergies, weight loss, Parkinson's disease, pain and many others. There are, however, many other factors that contribute to a decrease in salivary production including the aging process, radiation treatments and depression.

Aside from being a nuisance we know that the symptoms of dry mouth can cause significant dental hygiene problems. Saliva is the bodyâ€™s natural cleansing mouth rinse and at our Albany, NY Dental Office we know that each time we swallow, saliva washes away oral bacteria, as well as food and debris on which the bacteria feed. There are compounds in saliva that kill bacteria in the mouth, and dry mouth enhances the conditions for bacterial growth. Without proper dental hygiene, the ability for saliva to neutralize bacterial waste products is reduced.

If you suspect your chronic dry mouth may be due to medication, consult with your physician who may be able to adjust your dosage to help reduce the symptom. Here are some other steps you can take to reduce symptoms:

â€¢ Drink lots of water to keep your mouth hydrated

â€¢ Chew sugar-free candy or gum

â€¢ Use a vaporizer to add moisture to the air in your home and bedroom

â€¢ Purchase an artificial saliva substitute available at your pharmacy

Reduced saliva production leads to perfect conditions for the bacteria in your mouth to thrive, allowing it to linger at the gumline and between teeth, causing serious damage, periodontal disease or gingivitis. Since patients with dry mouth are at increased risk for periodontal disease, brushing regularly with fluoride toothpaste, using a fluoride rinse, and visiting your Albany Dentist frequently for cleanings and examinations - are extremely important to your oral health.

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