

Xerostomia – common problems

Did you clean your teeth this morning? Will you clean your teeth before you go to bed tonight? There are some people that won't say yes to those questions because they rely on others to deliver their care, are perhaps unconscious, or fed through the stomach (nil by mouth), have mental health problems (dementia) or drug and alcohol dependent and need to get their 'fix' from a local high street pharmacy.

Merchandise that can deliver good mouth care which is available over the counter today may not be as effective as clinically proven products meeting specific needs for those people more susceptible to erratic mouth care delivery.

One of those conditions is dry mouth, clinically known as Xerostomia.

Many people are aware of the problem but don't realise there are solutions to dry mouth. Often they feel it is 'something they have to live with' following a course of treatment or medication. The first choice of care for dry mouth is water, but it very short lived and doesn't adhere to the mouth to give significant relief.

A dry mouth is acidic. So teeth can start to rot very quickly if the mouth isn't put back to a normal pH. The pH of saliva is between 6 and 7.4.

So an acidic mouth leads to bad breath, tooth loss, gum disease and problems with dentures amongst other things.

Patients who wear dentures will have additional problems, primarily retention of their appliances. Absence of saliva may also result in obvious friction between the dentures and the oral mucosa. The use of proprietary fixatives and liners can be helpful, and one of the specialist moisturising gels, designed for xerostomics, may reduce symptoms. Daily cleaning of the prosthesis is essential.

About 75% of people suffering with a dry mouth do so as a result of the side effect of drugs. Really common drugs like anti-depressants are widely prescribed and create a really dry mouth. Equally there are seasonal conditions like hay fever which result in the purchase of anti-histamine as people suffering with the condition will self-diagnose their problem.

Conditions like rheumatoid arthritis cost the NHS £560 million a year with around 580,000 people in England having the disease and another 28,000 being diagnosed annually.

Patients often suffer depression as a result and as there are few psychological services for them; so they resort to GP's for anti-depressants.

The Journal of Advances in Clinical Neuroscience and Rehabilitation state that there are up to 10 million people have dry mouth in the UK.

75% of people over 65 years take at least one medication, with 30% of this category suffering from a dry mouth.

Everyone produces 1.5 litres of saliva a day slowing to virtually no flow at around 4am (assuming normal sleeping pattern) so this often why people can wake feeling the need to drink water.

Another common mouth condition is oral thrush with hundreds of thousands of people diagnosed each year. This is most common in new born babies, denture users, adults with diabetes or other metabolic disturbance, people with a dry mouth relating to side-effects of their medication (e.g. anti-psychotics) or medical conditions (e.g. Sjögrens Syndrome), people undergoing antibiotic or chemotherapy treatment, people prescribed oral steroid medication or steroid metered dose inhalers, drug users, people with poor nutrition, people with an immune deficiency.

8 to 10% of over 50's suffer from swallowing difficulties, while in elderly homes that grows to 40% with as many as 87% experiencing difficulty with eating meals. There are over 21,500 care homes, 4,500 nursing homes across England.

Over 700,000 people suffer from dementia in the UK and those in advanced stages will be less compliant to mouth care and therefore much more prone to oral thrush and a dry mouth as a result of commonly prescribed drugs for them.

Most long term degenerative diseases will also result in swallow difficulties and problems with eating and mouth care. One in 500 people, around 120,000 individuals, have Parkinson's while 100,000 people have been diagnosed with MS in the UK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines long term conditions (also called chronic conditions) as health problems that require on-going management over a period of years or decades. This includes a wide range of health conditions including non-communicable diseases (e.g. cancer and cardiovascular disease), communicable diseases (e.g. HIV/AIDS), certain mental disorders (e.g. schizophrenia, depression), and on-going impairments in structure (e.g. blindness, joint disorders). According to the Department of Health, there are seventeen and a half million people in the country living with a long term condition.

Around 300,000 people are diagnosed with cancer every year in the UK with millions continuing to live with cancer for many years following treatment. Some treatments may leave a patient with a dry mouth for the rest of their life.

And of course quality of life is absolutely paramount.

The BioXtra provides a complete all round solution to mouth care. The toothpaste and mouthrinse delivers good mouth care preventing oral thrush, which the lozenges and chewing gum stimulate saliva – and the chewing gum doesn't stick to dentures while the spray gel and moisturising gel gives immediate long term relief for a dry mouth.

Even ordinary complaints like snoring, mouth breathing or a common mouth ulcer in fit and healthy people can cause a dry mouth and be painful to clean.

THE BIOXTRA RANGE

The BioXtra range should be used as part of the everyday routine of cleaning and can be used as a normal regime and not treated as a special treatment that can only be prescribed or used for a short period of time.

BioXtra helps to prevent the formation of ulcers, candidiasis and other infections because it recreates a healthy mouth environment.

The range has natural ingredients and doesn't have harsh detergents like foam (SLS Sodium Lauryl Sulphate) and without it does reduce recurrent ulceration by 81%.

BioXtra is also pH neutral and clinically proven to relieve the symptoms of dry mouth in 14 days and there are no known contra-indications with any medicines. For instance it has been demonstrated that after 14 days of using BioXtra there is a 68% reduction in dryness, 69% improvement in chewing, 71% improvement in swallowing, 53% improvement in speech and 84% reduction in taste disturbance.

None of the BioXtra range contains alcohol and therefore reduces the chances of mouth cancer but does contain Xylitol which decreases the occurrence of caries and gingivitis, has very little flavouring and is clinically proven to disperse biofilm (plaque) bacteria.

Used daily the advanced formulation of the BioXtra products gently eases the sensations of dry mouth, reduces unwanted bacteria and leave the mouth feeling fresh and comfortable throughout the day and night

Toothpaste

The toothpaste has 1500 ppm (parts per million) fluoride which is the highest permitted in the UK to buy over the counter.

It is very mild to reduce any unnecessary pain when brushing and helps with the prevention of bleeding gums.

No rinsing is required so the fluoride will stay on the teeth continuing to deliver care for much longer than normal toothpastes, and with no Sodium Lauryl Sulphate it means there is no foam to restrict the view of the teeth and gums so the brusher can see if there is a source of bleeding.

Mouthrinse

The mouthrinse doesn't sting and doesn't stain which makes it a very popular alternative to Corsodyl.

It is anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-plaque with 1500ppm fluoride and is also alcohol free so is a gentle almost taste free refreshing mouthrinse which prevents oral thrush.

It also helps prevent bad breath and gets the flora of the mouth back to normal.

Spray Gel

It is easy to use gel spray which is light weight and easy to carry around for regular relief of dry mouth.

The spray works instantly for between 1 to 2 hours moisture and keeps the mouth in good condition as it also contains 150ppm fluoride.

The spray is effective for day time relief of dry mouth and has a pleasant taste

Moisturising Gel

This gel is slightly more viscous than the spray and therefore is much longer lasting as a result tends to get used at night time as one application can last up to 8 hours.

This is also a good method of securing dentures simply by applying it to the gums and then applying the teeth to secure their position in the mouth.

It also covers and protects mouth ulcers thereby instantly reducing mouth pain.

Range of clinical areas or patients that might suffer from dry mouth

Head and neck radiation

Long term degenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and MS

Auto immune diseases such as Sjögrens and Lupus

Renal patients – Due to liquid restrictions (often only 500ml of liquid allowed over 24 hours)

PEG fed patients

Unconscious

Nil by mouth

Stroke

Heart failure

Dysphasic patients

Dementia patients

Mouth breathers

Spinal Cord Injuries

Anyone on high pressure oxygen

Anyone with poor or reduced oral intake

Palliative Care

Diabetics

Aspirating problems

Care for the elderly

Burning Mouth Syndrome (BMS)

Crohn's Disease

Behcet's Disease

Learning Disabilities

Reduced oral intake

Macroglossia

Burning Mouth Syndrome