

Managing excessive drooling caused by your medical condition and/or medication

Speech and Language Therapy Service

Information for Patients

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Introduction

If you are taking certain medicines or have certain medical conditions, you may find that you produce too much saliva. Saliva can also leak from the mouth if you have weak muscles around the mouth or struggle to keep your head upright. This can happen all the time or only at certain times, such as when you are focused on a task or you feel more tired. You may be aware that you need to wipe your mouth more often to prevent more leaks. This leaflet gives you advice on what you can do to control excess saliva, with advice from the speech and language therapist.

Purposeful swallowing of saliva

Try to have **strong 'purposeful' swallows** at regular intervals to prevent a build-up of saliva in your mouth. (If you are less aware of the problem you may need a friend or family member to remind you to do this).

Some people use devices (**timers or mobile phone reminders**) to remind them to swallow more often.

Some people find that **chewing gum or sucking sweets** (sugar free) can help you to have more frequent swallows, and prevent saliva build up.

Head and body positioning

Wherever possible your head should be held up facing straight ahead and square to the body (midline position).

Try to use a chair that will help you to sit in a comfortable upright position.

If it is difficult to sit like this because you tend to lean to one side, try using cushions or pillows for support.

Try to keep your mouth closed fully as this creates a tight seal that will prevent saliva from escaping between the lips.

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or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Night-time saliva loss

When we sleep our swallowing reflexes and facial muscles relax. This means that saliva can collect. You may find that your pillow or night-clothes are damp when you wake.

It may be helpful to use several pillows at night to have a more upright position rather than to sleep flat (horizontal).

Wiping away excess saliva and protecting the lips

If saliva does leak it is important to gently pat the mouth. Wiping from side to side too hard may make the skin become sore.

It is a good idea to apply a barrier cream to the lips, as this helps to prevent them from becoming dry and chapped. This can be used during the day and at night. If you are on oxygen therapy make sure that you avoid petroleum-based products like Vaseline.

Sometimes the corners of the mouth can get inflamed, irritated and sore as a result of saliva loss - this is called angular cheilitis. If this happens you may need to speak with your GP about treatment.

Medical treatment

There are medical treatments available if you produce too much saliva. They are not suitable or appropriate for all people with problems with saliva control. If you need further advice, please talk to your GP or consultant to look at the risks and benefits of medical treatment options.

If you are also having problems with swallowing, please ask your GP to refer you to Speech and Language Therapy for a specialist swallowing assessment.

Contact details

If you are unsure about any of the information or need any further advice, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department on 0116 2954692.

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