

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 make too much saliva. Saliva can leak from your mouth. This can happen if you have weak muscles around the mouth or struggle to keep your head upright. It can happen all the time or only at certain times. For example when you are focused on a task or you feel more tired your saliva may leak. You may be aware that you need to wipe your mouth more often to prevent more leaks. This leaflet gives you advice from a speech and language therapist on what you can do to control excess saliva.

Purposeful swallowing of saliva

- Try to have **strong ‘purposeful’ swallows** of saliva. Do this 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 swallow often. It also stops saliva from building up.

Head and body positioning

- Wherever possible try to have your head held up facing straight ahead and square to the body. This is called the 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. This creates a tight seal that will stop saliva from leaking.

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

Night-time saliva

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

You may want to use pillows at night to have a more upright position rather than sleeping flat (horizontal). This should stop the saliva leaking out.

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 can make the skin sore.

It is a good idea to apply a barrier cream to the lips. This helps to prevent them from becoming dry and chapped. You can use this during the day and at night. If you are on oxygen therapy make sure that you do not use petroleum-based products like Vaseline.

Sometimes the corners of the mouth can get inflamed, irritated and sore because of saliva leaking. 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 your body makes too much saliva. They are not suitable for all people. If you need more 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 more advice, please contact the Speech and Language Therapy Department on **0116 295 4692**.

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