



# Saliva

## *Oh, the wonders of spit!*

Foamy, stretchy, thick or thin, saliva changes quantity and texture within seconds. The three main saliva glands in your mouth make about 2 pints of spit per day. Many smaller salivary glands are located in the lining of the mouth and throat that also add to the quantity.

So what does all that saliva do for you, anyway? The digestive juices in saliva breakdown starchy foods as well as lubricate and liquefy your food as you chew. It washes away food debris that may be left behind after swallowing and prevents oral bacteria from taking over tongue town. Packed with proteins and minerals, saliva plays an important role in making teeth harder, which helps prevent cavities. Saliva also seems to act as a buffer to prevent acids produced in the mouth from being too strong.

Almost as individual as your fingerprints, a non-invasive saliva test may soon replace blood as the body fluid of choice for diagnosis of diseases. Recent studies have shown that the presence of specific proteins in saliva were as accurate as a blood test in diagnosing a heart attack, even before it happens. Saliva may also be able to accurately detect certain forms of cancer and autoimmune diseases before they start.

And like so many things in life, saliva is not very important to the average person until they don't have any. As we age, saliva output decreases gradually. Dry mouth can be uncomfortable to unbearable

depending on the severity. Over 400 over the counter and prescription drugs decrease the the flow of saliva, leading to dry mouth, a sore tongue, difficulty speaking or swallowing, and less eating enjoyment. Some diseases can stop the flow altogether such as cancer, diabetes, and stroke. People with dry mouth frequently suck on hard candies, which lead to increased risk of tooth decay.

If dry mouth is interfering with your life, there are many products on the market that may help. Using mouth wash without alcohol, moisturizing mouth spray, specialty chewing gums and sugarless mints may help, as well as sipping water throughout the day. Your dental professional can help give you information so you can decide which ones are best for you.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/04/080416111556.htm>

<http://www.entnet.org/HealthInformation/salivaryGlands.cfm>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dry-mouth/HA00034>

<http://www.dry.org>

[www.SuperiorDental.com](http://www.SuperiorDental.com)