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Hydration and Dental Health

Dry mouth is more than uncomfortable. It promotes tooth decay and contributes to other oral health problems.

The causes of dry mouth range from medications – hundreds of drugs list dry mouth as a possible side effect - from emotional stress, radiation treatment to hormone changes. Talk to your doctor or dentist to determine the cause and treatment.

You can take simple steps to minimize the discomfort and improve the flow:

Sip water or sugarless drinks often to keep the mouth moist

Use a fluoride toothpaste and fluoride rinse to protect enamel

Avoid drinks with caffeine that can dry out the mouth

Chew sugarless gum or suck on sugarless hard candy to stimulate saliva

Avoid tobacco and alcohol that dry out the mouth

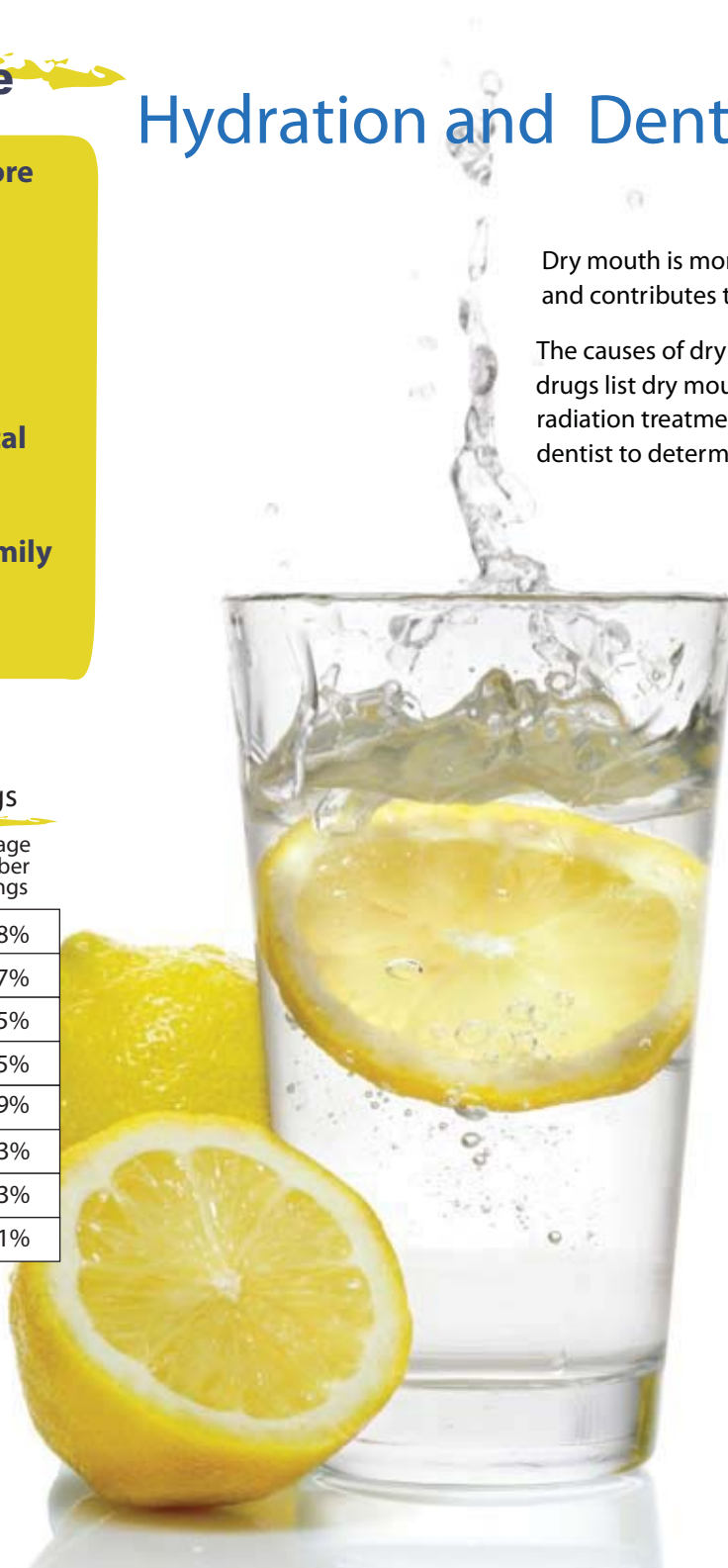
Use an over-the-counter artificial saliva substitute

Without the natural cleansing provided by saliva, tooth decay and other oral health problems increase. Taking good care of your teeth and gums every day, as well as regular dental checkups, are especially important if you have dry mouth.

Source: National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

Prescription Savings

| Month | Average Member Savings |
|-----------|------------------------|
| May | 37.48% |
| June | 34.57% |
| July | 32.85% |
| August | 37.05% |
| September | 35.39% |
| October | 34.83% |
| November | 33.73% |
| December | 35.41% |





Take care with toothpicks

Keep a light touch if you need to use wooden toothpicks to get rid of food trapped between teeth when your toothbrush and floss aren't available. Even better, reach for softer alternatives – some even have tiny, flexible rubber bristles.

Aggressive handling of wooden toothpicks can damage tooth enamel, injure gums, break a tooth, and damage the roots, especially if gums have pulled away from the teeth and root surfaces are exposed. It also can chip or break bonding or veneers if you aren't careful.

Use toothpicks sparingly, and never as a substitute for brushing and flossing.

Need a New Year's resolution? Try dental hygiene

If every year you resolve to lose weight or stop biting your fingernails, it may be time for a new resolution in 2009. Why not renew your commitment to great oral health and hygiene? Making a few simple changes to your daily routine could result in significant benefits to your teeth and gums. Here are some ideas to get you started toward your best dental year yet:

- Strive to floss daily. Flossing removes the build up of food and germs between teeth, which can lead to tooth decay. It's also been suggested that flossing plays a vital part in preventing heart disease, so this daily routine could save both your teeth and your life.
- Brush at least twice daily. You've heard it a million times, but brushing in the morning and again at night is very important to your overall oral health. Brushing removes bacteria and plaque that have coated your teeth after eating and helps prevent cavities from forming. This is especially necessary if you eat sugary foods or dessert at night.
- Replace your toothbrush at least every three months, or when the bristles begin to show wear. You should also replace it after you've recovered from an illness, like the flu. This will prevent bacteria from staying on your toothbrush and keep you from potentially getting sick again.
- Eat more dairy products and increase your calcium intake. Consuming calcium-rich foods and beverages is essential for the health of your bones, including your teeth. Along the same line, you should reduce your intake of caffeine or excessive sugar. Drinks like tea and coffee can stain your teeth, and sugar hastens the decay of unbrushed teeth.

Try yogurt for a more beautiful smile

Yogurt eaters are less likely to suffer from gum disease and tooth loss.

A study found that only a couple of ounces of yogurt a day are beneficial. Researchers speculate there is something about the healthy bacteria in yogurt that helps protect teeth and gums. They may help balance out the bad bacteria in your mouth, just as they do in your intestines.

Here are four more off-the-beaten-path ways from RealAge to protect your teeth:

Skip the soda. Sodas, both sugary and diet, may hasten erosion of your tooth enamel. It's not just sugar. Total acid content and acid type – look for phosphoric, citric, malic, and tartaric – in a beverage affect the strength of the acid attack on the enamel.

Get some straws. If you can't stay away from fizzy soda, sip it through a straw with the end placed near the back of your mouth to decrease contact time between your teeth and the acids.

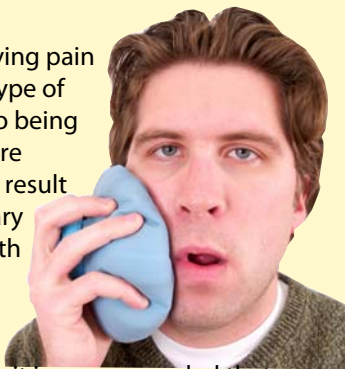
Drink diet or low-sugar red cranberry juice. Its compounds appear to keep bacteria from sticking to teeth, which could thwart tooth decay.

Brush gently. Brushing too long or too hard can damage tooth enamel and gums, and isn't any better at removing plaque than gentler, shorter movements.



Recognizing and treating toothaches

In its most basic form, a toothache is described as having pain in or around a tooth. If you've ever experienced this type of pain, you know it can grow from a mere annoyance to being a full-fledged medical problem. Usually, toothaches are caused by tooth decay and cavities, but they can also result from an infection. According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, tooth decay is caused by a combination of poor dental hygiene and genetics. However, a toothache can also be a sign of an earache, abscessed tooth, jaw or mouth injury, or even a heart attack. To treat the pain, it is recommended that you contact your dentist immediately to schedule an appointment. The benefit for you, as a True Care customer, is that you can be assured that you will get pain relief at a significantly reduced cost.



To help ease the pain during the time it takes to get in for an appointment, over-the-counter pain medications can also be taken. If the toothache is caused by a decayed tooth, your dentist may suggest such treatments as antibiotics or a root canal. As a final note, it's especially vital that you seek medical care if your toothache is causing you severe pain, if it lasts longer than one or two days, or if it is accompanied by a fever or earache. Your dentist will be able to treat the symptoms and can even take X-rays if the cause is not easily determined. Be prepared to answer questions about the frequency and strength of the pain, any associating symptoms, and factors that worsen the pain (for instance: drinking, consuming cold liquids, or chewing). If you have any doubts, the best course of action is always to seek the advice of a professional. This will save you from experiencing ongoing pain around your teeth and restore you to full health.

Protecting your family from prescription tampering

- Look at the package for tampering signs like broken seals, puncture holes, and open or damaged wrappings. These are all signs that the medication has been compromised.
- Look at the medication itself. Never take medication that is discolored, smells strange, or is in any way suspicious. Ask your pharmacist if you aren't sure about the condition of your medication. He or she will help you evaluate its safety.
- Always return suspicious medication to the pharmacist. It's better to be cautious and return something you think is suspect than risk ingesting it.
- Finally, check for tampering every time you take a dose. It's not enough to look only one time because something could change and cause you unexpected harm. To that end, you should also never take medication if you are not alert or able to see it clearly. It's impossible to tell if something has been tampered with if you cannot look at it properly.



Q: What can I expect to save with the Prescription benefit?

A: Prices will always vary on prescription drugs and therefore it is impossible to estimate specific dollar savings through any non-insured drug program. Your membership offers two avenues for drug purchases: The Neighborhood Pharmacy program offers 10% to 60% discounts on acute care medications and the Mail Order Pharmacy guarantees an average of 10% off AARP's prices. Should you receive a quote anywhere else for less than our Mail Order Pharmacy, we will beat it by a minimum of \$5.00 on brand name and generic medications priced at \$10.00 or more with no postage or dispensing fees added. Savings can not be used in conjunction with other discount or Insurance cards. Pharmacy discounts are not Insurance and are not Intended as a substitute for Insurance. The discount is only available at participating pharmacies.

| Name | Avg Retail Price | Discounted Price | Percent savings |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Vicodin | \$17.52 | \$11.01 | 37% |
| HCTZ | \$8.51 | \$6.53 | 23% |
| Amoxicillin | \$14.00 | \$10.24 | 27% |
| Soma | \$37.80 | \$17.96 | 52% |

How can your friends and family save at their local pharmacy?



Just by going to www.etruecarerx.com



Did you know?

You may know that it's not a good idea to consume food or beverage that has come from a damaged container, but do you give your prescription drugs the same amount of scrutiny? It's dangerous to take medication that has been tampered with because it could negatively impact your health or introduce elements to your body not intended by the drug manufacturer.

Tips and tricks for flossing your teeth

If you've already developed a consistent and healthy brushing schedule, congratulations! You're halfway down the road to achieving good oral hygiene. The other key to having a healthy mouth is learning proper flossing techniques. The British Dental Health Foundation recommends flossing at least once a day, and they give five suggestions to make your next flossing session more successful:

➤ Use about 18 inches of floss. This may seem like a lot, but once you wind it around your two middle fingers, you will be left with a sufficient amount to work with.

➤ Continue this process between each of your teeth, including the very back teeth. Don't be afraid to use a mirror, at least for awhile, so you can make sure you're flossing properly. In general, developing good habits will greatly improve the effectiveness of your flossing. If you have questions or want to request special floss for braces or crowns, please talk to your dentist or orthodontist. Any oral health professional that accepts your True Care membership plan will be able to help you improve your flossing habits. The sooner you start, the more benefits you will reap when it comes to having a hygienic mouth.



Q: How does the Dental Plan work?

A: Participating dental providers are listed in the membership fulfillment kit. members may also call the toll-free number located on the back of the membership card Monday through Friday, 7 AM to 7 PM and Saturday, 8 AM to 5 PM Central Time. When calling to schedule an appointment the member should identify him/herself as a member of the Aetna Dental Access® program. To receive the discount, the member must present the membership card and pay the total bill at the time of service.

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Please present your membership card at participating provider locations. Because this is not insurance, payment must be made at the time of service in order to receive a discount.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARDS

- Keep your membership cards with you at all times so it will be easily accessible to present at provider locations.
- Remember all members of your household can use the True Care Benefit card.