

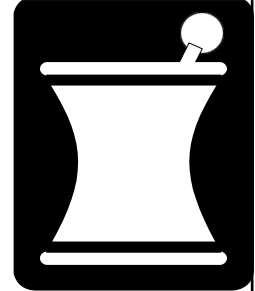
Mouth Problems with Psychiatric Medications

Patient Information - Hillmorton Hospital Pharmacy

Medications used to treat psychiatric conditions can cause problems in your mouth.

Some of the ways the medications can do this is by causing:

- Dry mouth (xerostomia)
- Teeth grinding or jaw clenching (bruxism)
- Drug-induced movement disorders (Extrapyramidal side effects or EPSE)
- Gum overgrowth (gingival hyperplasia)



Dry mouth

A dry mouth (or xerostomia) can be caused by medicines such as antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications. Saliva (spit) is very important because it protects our mouths. It is antibacterial, flushes away and breaks down our food, controls the acidity in our mouth, lubricates our mouths and strengthens our teeth.

A dry mouth will mean that you have a higher chance of getting tooth decay, mouth infections and gum disease. It can also change the way you taste food making chewing, swallowing and speaking difficult. A dry mouth can lead to bad breath (halitosis). Having less saliva to moisten your mouth can make dentures hard to wear and lead to mouth ulcers.

Teeth grinding

Teeth grinding (or bruxism) is linked with medications such as antipsychotics, stimulants and antidepressants, particularly SSRIs. Teeth grinding is also more common with some psychiatric conditions such as anxiety, ADHD, and using recreational drugs.

Drug induced movement disorders (Extrapyramidal side effects)

Drug induced movement disorders (Extrapyramidal side effects or EPSE), such as rigid muscles and shaking you can't control, can make it harder to clean your teeth. One type of drug induced movement disorder called tardive dyskinesia (repeating movements that you can't control) can make closing your mouth harder.

Gum overgrowth

Gum overgrowth (or gingival hyperplasia) can rarely be caused by some medications including sodium valproate. Food and plaque sitting on teeth and gums causes gum inflammation (gingivitis). If you have gum inflammation, the chances of getting gum overgrowth are higher.

Things you can do to keep your mouth healthy:

- Brush your teeth twice a day (morning and evening) with a fluoride toothpaste
- Try not to rinse after brushing your teeth
- Drink plenty of water
- Using sugarless chewing gum to stimulate saliva flow
- Avoid sugary drinks between meals
- Ask your dentist about artificial saliva or a fluoride varnish to protect teeth and gums

What to do if you have symptoms?

If you have symptoms, don't assume it is a side effect you have to live with. Talk to your dentist, doctor, case manager or pharmacist who will try and help.

Where can I find further information?

You will find more information about Dry Mouth at www.healthinfo.org.nz

**Hillmorton Hospital Pharmacy,
Annex Road, Christchurch
Telephone: (03) 339 1169**