DELTA DENTAL®

Medications Can Affect Oral Health

Medications are designed to help you feel better, but some can have a negative impact on your mouth and teeth.

One of the most common side effects is dry mouth. More than 400 medications can cause this condition, including decongestants, antidepressants, sedatives, antihistamines and blood pressure drugs.[1] Because saliva helps to keep your mouth clean, you can develop gum infections and tooth decay when there isn't enough of it.

Some medications can leave a metallic or bitter taste in your mouth or change the taste of foods. Among them are nicotine skin patches, respiratory inhalants and drugs for heart conditions.

Even aspirin can have side effects. As a blood thinner, aspirin can help to prevent a heart attack, but it also increases the chances of bleeding gums following a slight injury or infection.

Other possible complications from medications are mouth sores, gum swelling and bone loss.

If medicine triggers an oral health problem, ask your doctor about alternatives, and work with your dentist to relieve pain. Be sure to provide the dentist with a complete list of all the medications you use.

Did you know?

Nearly 70 percent of Americans are on at least one prescription drug, and more than half take two.[2]

Quick bites

Many liquid medications contain sugar. This increases the chances of developing tooth decay, but there are several ways to reduce that risk.

- Choose sugar-free options when possible
- Take medication with a meal, if it is allowed
- Ask if the medication is available in tablet form
- Rinse your mouth with water after taking medication
- Avoid taking medicine right before bedtime
- Brush with fluoride toothpaste twice a day for two minutes each time, and floss every day
- Seek regular preventive dental care

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Visit us online for more information on oral and overall health!

1 "Do You Have Dry Mouth?" *Journal of the American Dental Association* 133 no. 10 (2002): 1455. **2** Mayo Clinic, "Nearly 7 in 10 Americans Take Prescription Drugs, Mayo Clinic, Olmsted Medical Center Find," web.

Healthy Smile, Happy Life

Delta Dental of Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee

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