

Speech and Language Therapy

Saliva Management



What is saliva?

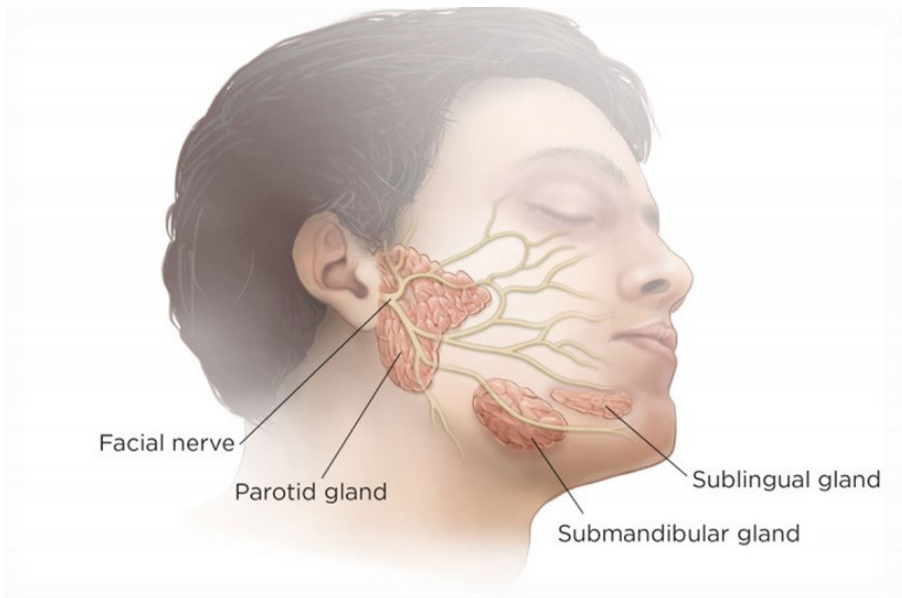
Saliva has an important function in helping to breakdown food and protect the mouth from drying and cracking. Too much or too little saliva can however be problematic.

We all produce about a litre and a half of saliva every day, we normally swallow very frequently.

Saliva difficulties

Some people experience discomfort and embarrassment due to reduced saliva control. It may be they are producing an increased amount of saliva or are unable to manage thin secretions resulting in saliva being lost from the corners of the mouth.

Saliva can also become thick and difficult to clear, particularly if a person has a weakened cough.

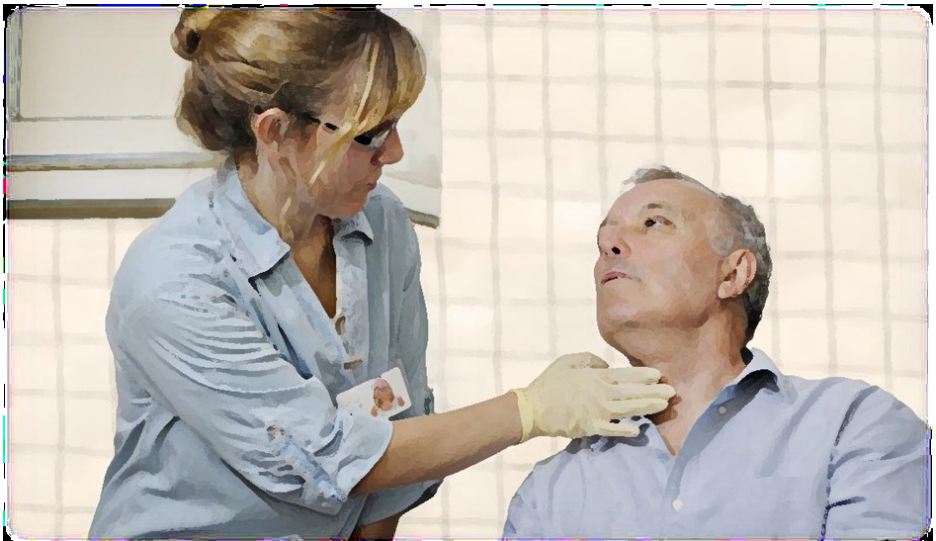


Who can help?

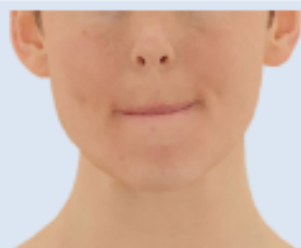
There are some professionals who may be able to help you manage your saliva. In some cases improving posture can help and Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy may be useful. Your GP may be able to help with medications.



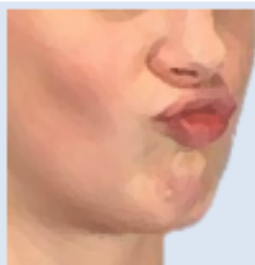
Before trailing medications your Speech and Language Therapist may make some of the suggestions. They may also provide some specific advice such as exercises for your lips to try and improve lip seal and prevent saliva escaping from your



Trial exercises to promote lip closure:



Close your lips as tightly as possible and hold



Purse your lips and hold



Spread your lips in a wide smile and hold



Puff air into your cheeks for as long as you can

Complete these exercises several times a day and/or discuss an appropriate program with your Speech and Language Therapist

Managing Excess thin Secretions

Try to maintain as upright position as you can, try not to let your head bend forward. Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy may be able to support with this.

Try to keep your mouth closed when reading, listening or watching television.

If you are experiencing difficulties with excess secretions at night, if possible try lying on your side.

Some food and drinks can help reduce saliva production. You could try:

- Dark Grape juice
- Ginger tea
- Sage tea

Try to swallow regularly e.g. every two minutes. Your Speech and Language Therapist may suggest using a swallow reminder. You can download 'swallow prompt' on your smartphone or tablet – go to **speechtools.co/swallow-prompt** to find out more.

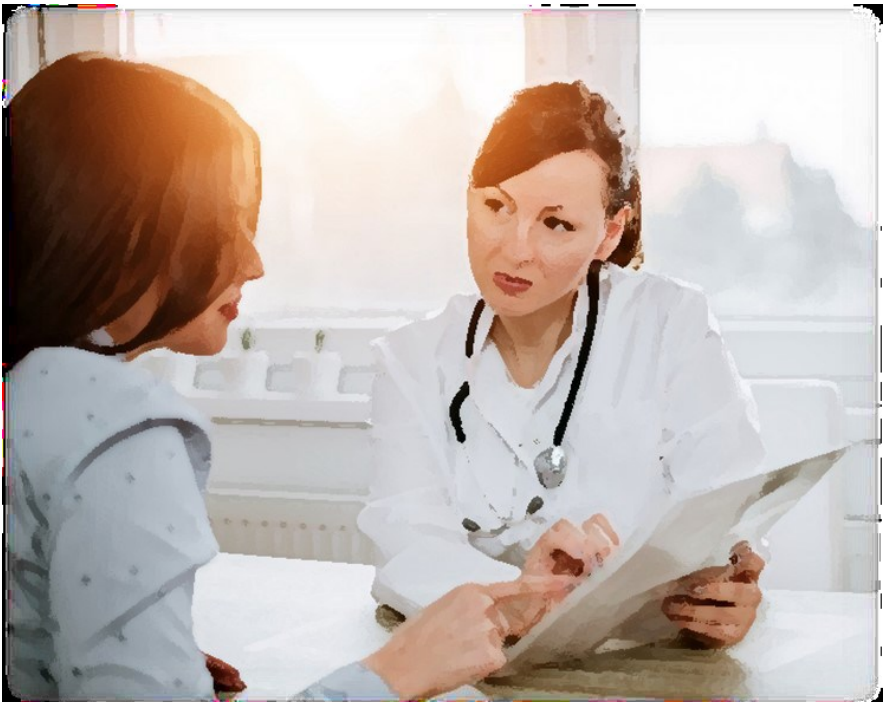
Avoid rubbing your chin horizontally as this can promote saliva production. Instead dab the area lightly.

Managing Excess thin Secretions Cont.

There are a variety of medications which your GP may be able to prescribe. Some have side effects and therefore need to be discussed on an individual.

If you continue to experience difficulty with secretions, your GP may discuss options for Botulinum toxin A (Botox) to the salivary glands which may decrease saliva production for weeks or months.

They may also consider whether oral suction may be required.



Managing thick, tenacious saliva and dry mouth

Your GP may need to review your medications as some can cause thick secretions or dry mouth .



Ensure you drink enough every day and take regular sips of water.

Clean around your mouth with a soft tooth brush and water or small amount of toothpaste.

If possible avoid or minimise alcohol and smoking as both increase dryness.

Avoid things that contain alcohol e.g. check the ingredients in certain mouthwashes.

If safe to do so, chewing gum or sucking sweets can help stimulate saliva production. Sugar free

sweets may be most appropriate if there are dental concerns.

Pineapple juice can help break down thick saliva



Managing thick, tenacious saliva and dry mouth Cont.

Steam inhalation/
humidification/nebulisers can
be useful but please discuss
with your GP or health profes-
sional

your GP may prescribe artifi-
cial saliva sprays/gels

If you have ongoing thick se-
cretions your GP may be able
to prescribe a mucolytic medi-
cation or consider whether
oral suction may be required.

