

Additional Notes



Saliva control and Parkinson's

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Patient information

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Some people with Parkinson's may have difficulties with saliva control which can lead to dribbling or drooling. The medical term for this is sialorrhea. This information provides useful tips to help with saliva control.

What is saliva?

Saliva is a clear liquid made by several glands in your mouth area. The glands that make saliva are called the salivary glands. The salivary glands are inside each cheek, at the bottom of your mouth, and near your front teeth. Your saliva helps to:

- keep your mouth moist
- chew, taste and swallow
- fight germs in your mouth
- prevent tooth decay and gum disease

You can make two to four pints of saliva a day, usually making less during the night.

Why do I have problems with saliva control?

Parkinson's causes your natural reflex to swallow to slow down. Swallowing less often or not completely can lead to saliva pooling in your mouth.

You are not producing any more saliva than usual, but the natural tendency to regularly swallow your saliva has slowed down.

For further information about Parkinson's contact:

Parkinson's UK

Email: hello@parkinsons.org.uk

Telephone: **02000 7318090**

Freephone helpline: **0808 800 0303**

Monday to Friday: 9am to 6pm

Saturday 10am to 2pm

www.parkinsons.org.uk

You can contact the Parkinson nurse specialists on

0300 019 8012 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday

Email: parkinsons.service@uhd.nhs.uk

- If you have poor posture when sitting or standing, advice from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist may be helpful.

Being aware

- Swallow your saliva more regularly. If you are aware of a watery feeling in your mouth then swallow. Swallow before you open your mouth to speak or eat. Try and swallow frequently throughout the day.
- Keep your lips together if you are not eating or speaking.
- Try and swallow as part of your daily routine, for example, swallow during advert breaks on television.
- Stick post it notes or coloured dots all over your home. Every time you see one, swallow.

Swallowing more frequently

- Take regular sips of water. Thick saliva is more difficult to swallow than thin.
- Chew sugar-free gum or suck sugar-free sweets. This will prompt you to swallow more frequently and reduce the saliva building up in your mouth.
- Use swallow prompts that give you a sound or a vibration to remind you to swallow. You can download a 'swallow prompt' application which can be used on your mobile phone or tablet. This allows you to set the frequency of the reminders to swallow. More information can be found at: speechtools.co/swallow-prompt

Lip sealing exercises

- You can practise lip seal exercises to help with lip strength.
- You can exercise by doing the following movements and holding for a count of three, then releasing the stretch and allowing your face to return to 'normal'.
- Check your facial movements in the mirror to make sure you are using enough effort - each movement should show a big stretch.

Exercises:

Close your lips as tightly as you can, hold and release.

Repeat this five times.

Close your lips as tightly as you can, then puff out your cheeks, hold and release. **Repeat this five times.**

Puff out your cheeks and press your cheeks one at a time while holding your lips closed, hold and release.

Repeat this five times.

Push your lips forward as if going to kiss or whistle, hold and release. **Repeat this five times.**

Stretch your lips in a wide smile, hold and release.

Repeat this five times.

What else can I do to help with saliva control?

- Avoid or reduce your intake of citrus or acidic products as these may cause you to produce more saliva.
- Keep your lips moist with lip salve to help prevent soreness, particularly at the corners of the mouth.

- Try to dab the saliva from your lips and chin rather than wiping it. Wiping can encourage the salivary glands to produce more saliva.
- Wear a sweatband on your wrist which can be used to discretely wipe your mouth.
- Visit your dentist regularly.

How can speech and language therapy help?

A speech and language therapist can teach you useful techniques to help with saliva control. They can help to develop exercises to help with lip strength, better posture and ways to encourage frequency of swallowing.

Are there other treatments that can help with saliva control?

Certain drugs can help control the production of saliva. However, these can have side effects such as causing your mouth to become too dry and they are not suitable for everyone. The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), who provide evidence-based recommendations for Parkinson's, recommend that drugs should only be considered after other means, such as speech and language therapy, have not worked.

In certain circumstances, regular injections of botulinum toxin (Botox) into the salivary glands can be given. This interrupts nerve messages from the brain that tell the glands to produce saliva. This can have side effects such as a dry mouth, thickening of saliva and swallowing difficulties. The results are temporary, lasting approximately three months.

What problems can lack of saliva control cause?

A lack of saliva control can lead to irritation and discomfort around your mouth. It can also lead to problems with the health of your mouth and teeth. This can make some everyday activities, such as eating and talking, difficult. In some cases, saliva can enter the lungs (aspiration) which can increase the chance of a chest infection.

A lack of saliva control can also lead to feelings of embarrassment, distress and negatively affect your quality of life. Soiled and damaged clothing may result in needing to change it often.

What can help to control my saliva?

Improved posture

- Pay attention to your posture. Try to keep your head in an upright position. If you are in a head-down posture, saliva will escape from the mouth more easily.
- When sat down, make sure the chair has good back, head and neck support so that your head is kept more upright – you can also support your head with cushions.
- If saliva control is more difficult at night you can raise your head or lie on your side to allow saliva to drain out from your mouth.
- If saliva control is more difficult when walking, humming can help encourage your lips to stay closed.