

Salty, dry mouth — Why? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

My mouth has a constant salty, dry taste. What gives?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Having a persistent salty taste in the mouth is a relatively common symptom for various underlying conditions. Although changes in taste are usually not indicative of serious health problems, you're right to investigate your salty situation!

A constant salty taste is usually a result of changes in the quantity or chemical composition of your saliva at a given point in time. The following conditions are common, highly treatable, and are likely to be responsible for the persistent salty taste in your mouth:

- Dry mouth, or xerostomia, a condition that also causes cottonmouth and tooth decay and interferes with a person's ability to talk and eat. To fight dry mouth, drink lots of water, avoid spicy and salty foods, chew sugar-free gum, and consider trying any of the various moisturizing oral rinses on the market.
- Dehydration, often a result of not drinking enough fluids throughout the day. Most adults require a minimum of six to eight glasses of water per day. Sugar-free beverages and ice chips also count, so drink (or chew) up!

There are other more serious possible explanations behind the salty taste in your mouth. If you suspect you may be experiencing any of the following medical conditions, schedule an appointment with your health care provider for evaluation:

- Post-nasal drip, which often occurs with allergies or throughout the course of a sinus infection.
- Side effects of over 400 medications may result in changes in taste or moisture level in the mouth.
- Acid reflux, which can also cause a bitter or sour taste in the mouth.
- Diseases and infections of the salivary glands, including Sjögren's syndrome, a disease

that causes the immune system to erroneously attack moisture-making glands in the body.

- Hormonal changes, often precipitated by menopause or pregnancy.
- Chemotherapy and other radiation treatments of the head or neck.
- Severe cases of nutritional deficiency.

It's good to determine how long you've been dealing with the persistent salty taste in your mouth — if it has only been a few days, focus on hydration and saliva production by practicing the tips mentioned above. However, if the taste has been there for weeks or months or if you have any remaining concerns, don't hesitate to make an appointment with your health care provider. For more information on hydration and meeting all of your nutritional needs, check out the ChooseMyPlate.gov [2] site to learn how to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Good luck!

Alice!

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