

# Strategies to Help and Prevent Dry Mouth

Dry mouth, also known as xerostomia, can be an uncomfortable condition that affects your daily life. It occurs when your salivary glands don't produce enough saliva to keep your mouth moist. Most individuals who are on hemodialysis need to manage their fluid intake in order to prevent fluid volume overload. Here are some effective strategies to help manage and prevent dry mouth:

## 1. Chew Sugar-Free Gum or Suck on Sugar-Free Candies

Chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free hard candies can stimulate saliva production. Look for products containing xylitol, which can be particularly effective. By choosing sugar free products, diabetic dialysis patient doesn't have to worry about the extra sugar affecting their blood sugar.



## 2. Avoid Caffeine and Alcohol

Caffeine and alcohol can dry out your mouth. Try to limit or avoid coffee, tea, sodas, and alcoholic beverages. Also, be cautious of hidden alcohol in mouthwashes.



## 3. Use a Humidifier

Adding moisture to the air with a humidifier, especially at night, can help keep your mouth from drying out while you sleep<sup>1</sup>. Humidifiers can help with dry air through the day which will help prevent dry mouth. Fall and winter can be very dry here in Nebraska!



## 4. Moisten Your Food

Incorporate broths, sauces, or gravies into your meals to make them easier to chew and swallow. This can be particularly helpful if your salivary glands aren't producing enough saliva. Lemon juice in water can also help with stimulating the production of saliva.



## 5. Avoid Tobacco Products

Smoking and chewing tobacco can exacerbate dry mouth. Quitting these habits can improve your overall health and help alleviate dry mouth symptoms.



## 6. Use Saliva Substitutes

There are over-the-counter saliva substitutes available that can help keep your mouth moist. Look for products containing carboxymethylcellulose or hydroxyethyl cellulose. Examples include Biotene Dry Mouth Oral Rinse or Act Dry Mouth Mouthwash.



## 7. Practice Good Oral Hygiene

Brush your teeth after every meal and before bedtime with fluoride toothpaste. Consider using a fluoride rinse or gel, and visit your dentist regularly to monitor your



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## 8. Avoid Certain Foods and Drinks

Stay away from sugary, spicy, salty, and acidic foods and drinks, as they can increase dryness and the risk of tooth decay.

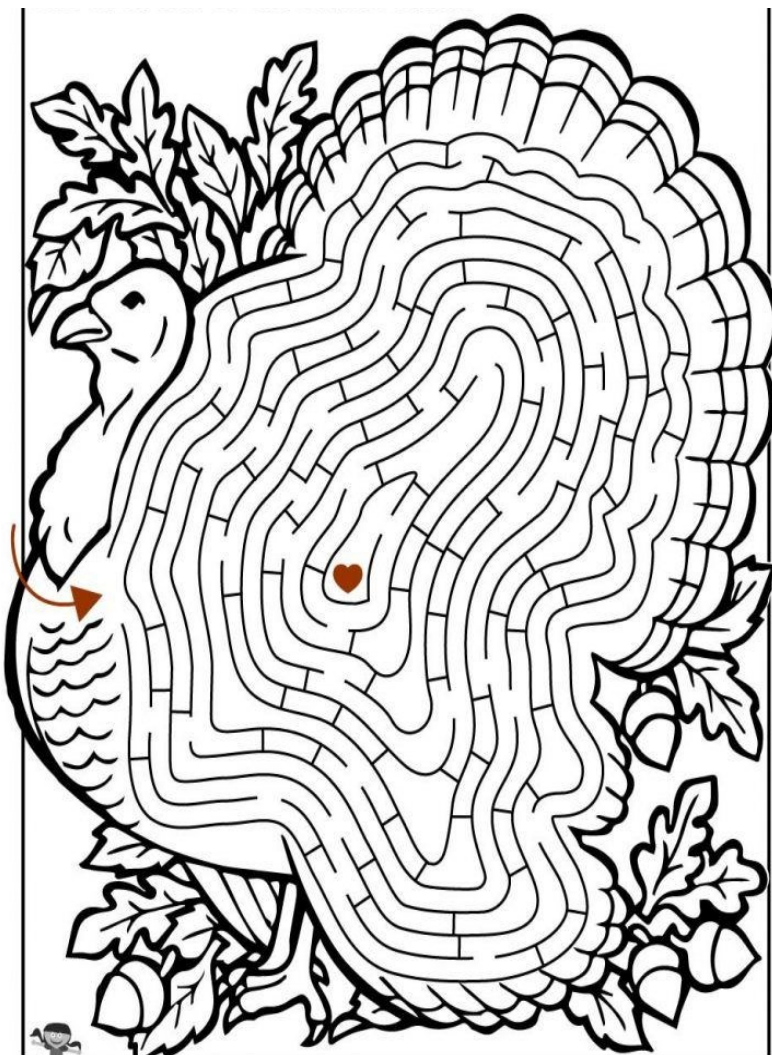


## 9. Consult Your Doctor, Dentist, or Dietitian

If these strategies do not alleviate your dry mouth, it may be due to an underlying health condition or medication. Consult your doctor, dentist, or dietitian for further evaluation and treatment options.



By incorporating these strategies into your daily routine, you can manage and prevent dry mouth effectively,



## Travel Reminder

If you are traveling please remember that we need 3-4 weeks to get your travel arrangements made. If you do have an emergency we are sometimes luck enough to find a center that works fast on a travel request.

For Travel Requests or for more Info please call Kim at 402.489.5339



# Sepsis & Peritonitis Awareness

Sepsis is an infection of the bloodstream. It can happen in people receiving hemodialysis if germs enter the bloodstream through their vascular access (e.g. fistula, graft, or hemodialysis catheter). Peritonitis is an infection of the abdominal cavity. It can happen in people receiving peritoneal dialysis if germs enter the abdominal cavity through the peritoneal catheter. There are steps that people receiving dialysis can take to reduce the risk of developing sepsis or peritonitis. These steps focus on practicing the basics of infection prevention.

What is the **first thing** you think of when you think about preventing an infection? If you thought **washing your hands**, then you are right! Washing your hands often when they are dirty and before eating and doing dialysis are essential to helping reduce your risk of getting an infection.

There are several steps to washing your hands appropriately. They can be seen in the flyer provided by QSource that is included with this article. It should take you 40-60 seconds, or about 1 minute, to appropriately wash your hands. You will see on page 2 of the flyer that there are areas of the hands that are commonly missed when washing them. These areas include the thumbs, fingertips, between the fingers, under the fingernails, and around the wrists. Pay close attention to these areas the next time you wash your hands after using the bathroom, before eating, before starting dialysis, and other times you notice your hands are dirty or think they are.

The second flyer included with this article is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It is an infographic that shows times when your hands can become dirty and when you should wash them. Feel free to refer to these two flyers to help you remember why washing your hands frequently is important. It is also important to remember that as the drier winter weather sets in, it is important to apply lotion to your hands after washing them. Use lotion when you notice your hands feel dry to help prevent sores from developing. Sores on your hands can be painful and may also lead to infections.

## Here are some additional ways to keep your dialysis access healthy and free from infection:

Hemodialysis Access	Peritoneal Access
Wash the skin over your fistula or graft every day	Wash hands appropriately before touching your PD catheter
Check your fistula, graft, or hemodialysis catheter every day for signs of infection	Wear your face mask when doing anything with your peritoneal catheter
Do not scratch or pick at any scabs on or around your fistula, graft, or hemodialysis catheter	Keep your PD supplies sterile and free from germs. Ask your PD nurse how to do this, if you need assistance
Let your dialysis team know if anything is different with your fistula, graft, or hemodialysis catheter	Ask your PD nurse about applying a medicated cream to your PD catheter site each day to help reduce germs in the area
Signs of Sepsis	Signs of Peritonitis
A high temperature may or may not happen Confusion or being agitated Fast, shallow breathing Sweating, shaking and/or shivering for no clear reason Fast heart rate and/or low blood pressure	A high temperature may or may not happen Sore, swollen belly Sweating, shaking and/or shivering for no clear reason Making less urine than normal Cloudy look to the peritoneal fluid during dialysis

Talk with the dialysis nurses if you do not feel well or if you notice your dialysis site is reddened, feels warm to the touch, and/or if the dialysis access site is painful. Contact your healthcare provider if you have the signs of sepsis or peritonitis or call 911 if you need to go to the hospital. Do not wait! The signs are telling you something is not right with your body.

It is important to wash your hands often as a first step to keep yourself healthy and free of infection. Ask your dialysis nurse if you have questions about infection and how to prevent it.



# Gratitude



## The Benefits and How to Practice It

While it's not always easy, being grateful for the positives in life can have a profound impact on your mood, outlook, and overall well-being. Here's how to increase your gratefulness.

### What is gratitude?

Gratitude involves showing appreciation for the things in life that are meaningful or valuable to you. Taking a moment to notice and acknowledge the things you're grateful for each day can brighten your outlook, boost your mood, and help you feel more positive in the face of challenges.

While it's easy to feel a rush of joy after winning the lottery or receiving a big promotion at work, gratitude extends to the smaller blessings in life that are often overlooked or taken for granted. Even the smallest moments, such as a brief chat with a friend, a kind gesture from a stranger, a cool breeze on a hot day, or a peaceful stroll in nature, are things that you can be thankful for.

Whatever your circumstances in life, you may find that consistently showing gratitude can be surprisingly difficult. Many of us get caught up in a negativity bias, where we linger on bad news and unpleasant experiences, yet allow moments of positivity to fade into the background.

Maybe you spend so much time dreading work on Monday that you don't take time to fully appreciate the weekend. Or perhaps you're so focused on your own verbal slip-up at a party that you don't register a compliment from a friend. And if you have a mood disorder such as depression, being able to see any positives or express gratitude can seem impossible.

Fortunately, gratitude is like a muscle that you can build. With the right exercises and practice, you can find at least something small to appreciate in even the bleakest day. The idea of cultivating gratitude might sound cheesy, but research has shown that it can have very real benefits. With these tips, you can use gratitude to uplift your mood, find respite from negativity, foster stronger relationships, and even change the way you view yourself.

### Benefits of practicing gratitude

A little gratitude can do wonders for your mood. When you practice gratitude, you shift your thoughts away from negative emotions and uncomfortable sensations. Instead, you begin to focus on good things that you may have overlooked.

Rather than focusing on the misfortune of having a flat tire, for example, you consider how your job has made it possible to pay for repairs. Or you shift your focus to how fortunate you are to have close friends who are willing to drive you home.

This kind of thinking leads to a release of serotonin and dopamine, chemicals in the brain that are associated with happiness and pleasure. Acknowledging gratitude also decreases stress hormones. The short-term result is a reduction in anxiety and an improvement in mood. In the long-term, regularly practicing gratitude may also lead to lasting changes in your brain, priming you to be more grateful going forward.

Because gratitude can boost your mood, perhaps it's no surprise that it can also improve your overall mental health. As you practice gratitude, you may notice a decrease in symptoms of depression and anxiety. While gratitude alone may not be a magic bullet to mental health issues, it can be one part of a broader treatment plan.



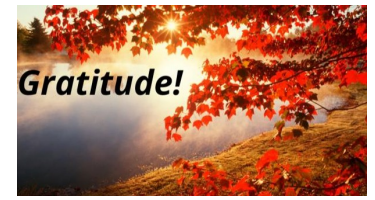
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Newsletter



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Approaching life with a more positive mindset can do more than just improve your mood. It can have cascading benefits in other areas of your life, such as:

**Better sleep.** Some research links increased gratitude with [higher quality sleep](#) and fewer sleep disturbances. This might be because expressing gratitude right before bed allows you to fall asleep with a more positive outlook.

**Improved focus.** Gratitude might make it easier for you to focus. If you begin to view the task in front of you — whether it's schoolwork or job duties — in a more positive light, you spend less energy feeling stressed about it. You might even begin to view challenges, such as an upcoming exam, as opportunities rather than hurdles. This can improve your [emotional resiliency](#).

**Higher self-esteem.** Viewing the world with a sense of gratitude can change the way you think about your own worth. Imagine that a friend treats you to lunch. As you express your appreciation, you also begin to realize that your friend is spending time and resources on you because they value you. You then internalize the thought that you're important to others.

**Increased patience.** The results of 2016 research seemed to indicate that people who regularly express gratitude are more patient. So, if you want to increase self-control and reduce impulsiveness, try practicing gratitude. Other research shows a potential connection between gratitude and other virtues, such as humility and wisdom.

### **Practice mindfulness**

Remembering to slow down and savor little moments in your life can be a way to cultivate gratitude. Tap into your senses and let your mind linger on pleasant, everyday sensations. Focus on the taste of a ripe strawberry, for example, the feeling of the sun on your skin, or the gentle sound of background music. This can help ground you in the present, pulling you away from rumination and worrying.

If you find yourself focusing on the same thing every day, try to home in on different aspects that you appreciate. For example, if you take a walk in the same stretch of the park every day, you might choose to focus on the pleasant sounds of nature one day and the sights the next day.

You can also use more structured meditation practices to tap into mindfulness. Set aside some time to listen to HelpGuide's guided audio mediation, [Gratitude in Difficult Times](#). The meditation guides you through a calming exercise that incorporates both mindfulness and gratitude.

### **Revisit and reframe past events**

Most of us can recall past events that we regret. It could be anything from failing to study for an important test to lashing out at a close friend. Or maybe you regret a poor financial decision or a missed opportunity in dating. Although they may have led to disappointment, shame, or even heartbreak, you've likely also learned something from these experiences.

How did they contribute to your growth? Did they make you more cautious, assertive, or compassionate? By finding lessons within the tough experiences in life, you can cultivate more gratitude. You can even consider combining this with the journaling exercise. Come up with a list of past misfortunes and the lessons you've learned from each.

While these gratitude exercises can give your mood and outlook a welcome boost, it can take time for them to impact your mental health and overall well-being. Be patient and continue practicing gratitude. Turn the exercises into little rituals. In time, you may notice your stress levels drop and relationships strengthen. Then, you'll have even more reasons to be grateful.