

# GET WISE

## About Your Oral Health

### Medications Can Affect Oral Health



Medications may help you feel better, but some can have a negative impact on your oral health.

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

Medications such as respiratory inhalants and drugs for heart conditions can leave a metallic or bitter taste in your mouth, and aspirin can increase 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 your medications.

### Did you know?

Nearly 70 percent of Americans are on at least one prescription drug, and more than half take two.<sup>2</sup>



# Quick bites

Many liquid medications contain sugar. This increases the chance 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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<sup>1</sup> "Do You Have Dry Mouth?" *Journal of the American Dental Association* 133 no. 10 (2002): 1455. <sup>2</sup> Mayo Clinic, "Nearly 7 in 10 Americans Take Prescription Drugs, Mayo Clinic, Olmsted Medical Center Find," web.

