



## Medications and Your Oral Health

Some medicines and their side effects can affect your mouth.

Few things in the body are unconnected. A pain in your hip, for instance, can be caused by your feet and can lead to pains elsewhere in the body. So it should come as no surprise that your mouth is connected to your heart and lungs. Gum disease is also linked to diabetes and low newborn birth weight.<sup>1</sup> Prescription or not, some medicines can affect your oral health.<sup>2</sup>

- Dry mouth is a common side effect of many medications. Saliva moves food particles away from your teeth and reduces plaque acids. So having dry mouth can increase your risk of tooth decay. To keep saliva flowing, suck sugarless hard candies or chew sugarless gum. Sip water, avoid drying beverages containing caffeine or alcohol, and stop smoking. Lozenges made for dry mouth are also effective.<sup>3</sup>
- Soft tissues—gums, cheeks, tongue—can be affected by some medications. People with asthma are more prone to thrush, an oral yeast infection. Rinsing after the use of inhalers can help prevent it.
- Cancer treatments can also affect oral health. Speak to your dentist before beginning cancer treatment so that you can protect your mouth.
- Blood thinners and some pain medicines can cause prolonged bleeding. If you are on a blood thinner, dental cleanings, extractions, and surgeries can be tricky. You may be asked to stop your medication for a short time or switch to another type before these kinds of treatments. Your dentist may want to consult with your physician, too.



- Some drugs to strengthen bones or treat cancer can cause issues after oral surgery

As you see, many different types of drugs can interfere with dental treatments. Please share this information with your dentist. It's an important part of maintaining good oral health.

### Managing Pain with Medicine

Sometimes dental work can cause pain. If your dentist prescribes an opioid medicine, limit this to a day or two. Better: Treat your pain with ibuprofen or acetaminophen. A combination of the two is shown to work better even for extreme dental pain.<sup>4</sup>

The Guardian Life Insurance  
Company of America

guardianlife.com

New York, NY.  
2019-91942 (exp. 01/22)

1 <https://www.healthline.com/health/periodontitis>, May 2017.

2 <https://www.colgate.com/en-us/oral-health/life-stages/adult-oral-care/ada-06-medications-sideeffects>, accessed May 2018.

3 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dry-mouth/expert-answers/dry-mouth/faq-20058424>, February 2017.

4 <https://www.goodrx.com/blog/is-it-safe-to-take-tylenol-acetaminophen-with-advil-or-motrin-ibuprofen/>, August 2019.

Material discussed is meant for general informational purposes only and is not to be construed as medical advice. Although the information has been gathered from sources believed to be reliable, please note that individual situations can vary. You should always consult a licensed professional when making decisions concerning oral health care. Avēsis Incorporated and Avēsis Third Party Administrators, Inc., are wholly owned subsidiaries of Guardian. Guardian® is a registered service mark of The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, New York, NY. ©2019 Avēsis Incorporated. ©2019 Guardian. All rights reserved. Used with express permission.