

Oralieve®

Dry Mouth - a survey of people affected.

April 2024



Introduction

Welcome to the Oralieve Dry Mouth Survey Results

Dry mouth is a condition that affects 1 in 4 people¹ yet is significantly under-reported. However the impacts on the sufferer can be significant.

As the population of the UK ages, and asymptomatic people are increasingly treated with preventative interventions to reduce the risk of future mortality, the rate of polypharmacy increases.

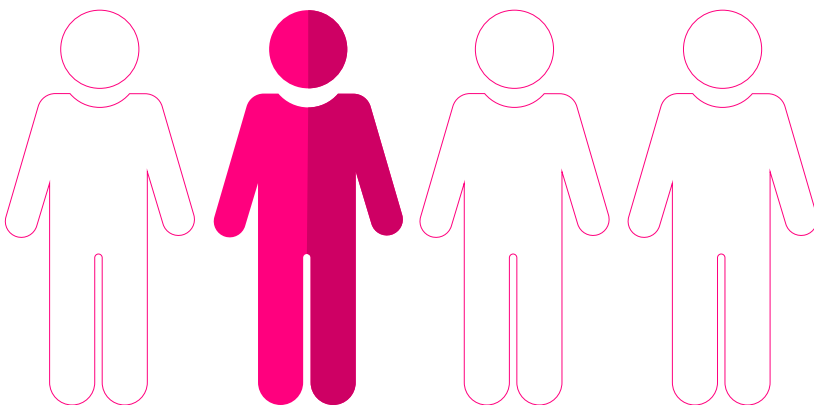
In 2022-23 almost **1.2 billion prescription items were dispensed** in England alone,² with the most dispensed drug [atorvastatin] **resulting in oral dryness in 88.5% of patients.²**

Increased life expectancy with patients keeping their natural dentition for longer, when combined with increased medication, presents new problems for both the sufferer and the dental team.

Not only does oral dryness **increase the risk of oral disease and tooth loss**, the social and psychosocial affects associated with a dry mouth can have a significant impact on the quality of life of sufferers.

At **Oralieve** we strive to understand the affect dry mouth can have on sufferers, their coping mechanisms and how they articulate the condition to family, friends and healthcare professionals. To deepen this understanding we undertook an **annual survey of approximately 1000 sufferers** in what is the **most comprehensive survey of its kind**.

The survey results this year continue to highlight the issues of under-diagnosis, as well as the **real-life impacts the condition can have on sufferers**.



References: 1. Niderfors T *et al*. Prevalence of perceived symptoms of dry mouth in an adult Swedish population - relation to age, sex and pharmacotherapy. Community Dent Oral Epidemiol 1997; 25: 211-16.

The importance of diagnosis

Dry mouth is considered **‘one of the most underappreciated, underdiagnosed and under managed oral health conditions’** and despite the negative impact the condition can have on oral health and associated quality of life, it is also generally poorly understood.³

Prevalence of perceived dry mouth could be **as high as 65% in some populations** yet is underreported by patients and under-recognised by practitioners. As such it is important for oral health professionals to be confident in identifying patients at risk and providing strategies to improve quality of life for sufferers of this common condition.^{4,5}

Results of the Dry Mouth Survey clearly demonstrate that the dental team is pivotal in identifying dry mouth in patients, with over a quarter of sufferers reporting diagnosis by dentists or hygienists.

However, perhaps more alarming is the insight that almost **40% of sufferers have never been diagnosed by a healthcare professional**, instead relying on self-diagnosis of the condition.

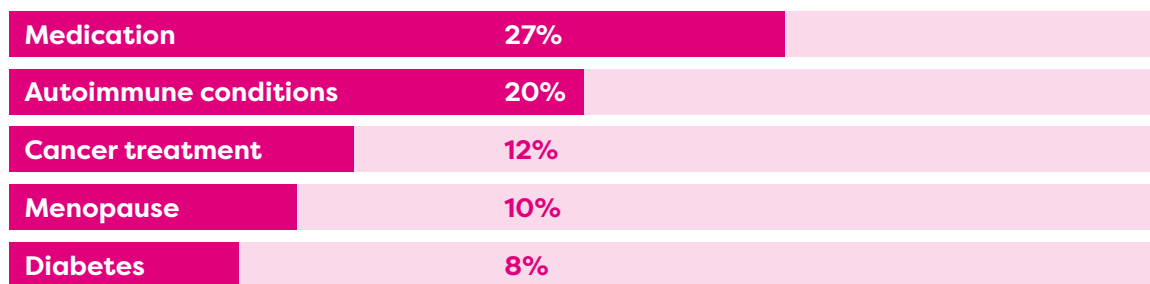
When it comes to managing a dry mouth, it's important for sufferers to understand what they are experiencing is an actual ‘condition’ and that there are options for improving oral comfort and health. With the increase in prevalence, the role of the healthcare profession, especially the dental team, has never been more important.



3. Frydrych A. Aust Fam Physician 2016 Jul;45(7): 488-92. Dry mouth: Xerostomia and salivary gland hypofunction. 4. Navazesh M, Kumar SK. Xerostomia: prevalence, diagnosis, and management. Compend Contin Educ Dent. 2009;6:326-332. 5. Plemons JM, Al-Hashimi I, Marek CL. Managing xerostomia and salivary gland hypofunction: a report of the ADA Council on Scientific Affairs. J Am Dent Assoc. 2014;145:867-873.

Identified sources of dry mouth

Medications have long been identified as the most common cause of dry mouth suffering, and over **27% of the research sample** identify medication as the cause of their dry mouth.



Perhaps most concerning is the finding that **over a third of sufferers** are unsure as to the cause of their dry mouth. This clearly highlights the importance of healthcare professional engagement in supporting patients understand the aetiology, and most importantly the management of the condition.

When do people feel dry mouth symptoms are at their worst?

Whilst 20% of dry mouth sufferers report morning is the peak time for suffering with symptoms, and almost a third suffer throughout the day and night, almost 1 in 4 report night-time being the worst time for symptoms.

The impact of night-time dry mouth is evident with over half [53%] of sufferers reporting symptoms moderately or severely affect their sleep patterns, with 68% reporting mental exhaustion and frustration from coping with their symptoms.

Impacted sleep and the associated mental exhaustion are the No 1 reported quality of life impacts reported by dry mouth sufferers.



The impacts of dry mouth

Sufferers report a number of impacts arising from their dry mouth, all of which could have physical and social implications.

Symptom	Moderately/severely impacted
Sore or painful mouth	44%
Tongue sticking to roof of mouth	35%
Difficulty eating	33%
Disturbed sleep	53%
Difficulty speaking	26%
Bad breath	18%
Mental exhaustion	38%
Decreased socialising	22%

However, perhaps truer insight comes from the words sufferers use to describe their dry mouths, including:



Managing dry mouth

It is clear from the research that sufferers are 'on the hunt' for management strategies that can help alleviate the symptoms associated with the lack of saliva, with **only 3% of sufferers** stating they had not previously tried any potential remedy.

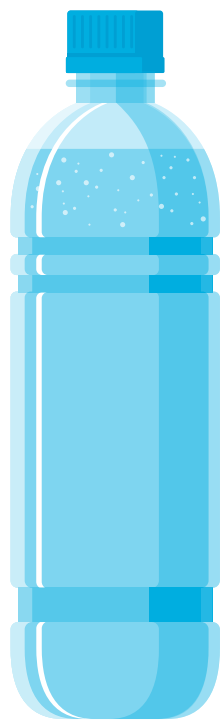
The most prevalent approach is the frequent sipping of water; a tactic employed by **over 80% of sufferers**.

It is encouraging to note that **66% of sufferers** have turned to dry mouth relief products, be that gels or sprays, with a further 52% stating sucking on sweets, and 38.5% stating chewing gums formed part of their management strategy.

Duration of suffering

Dry mouth can be a long-term condition, leaving sufferers feeling **frustrated and mentally exhausted** from coping with the symptoms.

Over 1 in 5 of the sufferers surveyed had been experiencing symptoms for **7 or more years**, whilst a further 1 in 5 have displayed symptoms for less than 12 months, suggesting there is **no slowing of new sufferers entering the category**.



80%
**of those with
dry mouth**
have tried sipping
water as a method
to relieve dry
mouth symptoms

Summary

As the UK population continues to age, and there is an increased reliance on preventative medication, the incidence of clinically dry mouth will continue to rise.

The mental and physical impacts of suffering are clear, with **disturbed sleep patterns and exhaustion** arising in the majority of sufferers.

Despite the rising prevalence and the clear health impacts, many sufferers go undiagnosed and have little understanding as to the causes of their symptoms, and potentially suitable management options.

It is acknowledged that dry mouth is an underappreciated and undermanaged condition and the impacts are clearly

evidenced by the choice of words sufferers use to describe their dry mouths. Sufferers shouldn't need to feel 'in pain, embarrassed or cut off from the normalities of life.'

The key to helping sufferers more effectively manage the symptoms of dry mouth is DIAGNOSIS – identifying the causes and initiating discussions about effective management beyond just sipping water.

The dental team, in particular, are leading the way when it comes to diagnosis, with **1 in 4 identified by dentists or hygienists / therapists.**

However there is still much more to be done!



About Oralieve

Since 2017 **Oralieve** has been helping dry mouth sufferers **better understand the potential causes of their symptoms**, but more importantly signpost options to manage the condition more effectively.

The **Oralieve Expert Team** engage with thousands of healthcare professionals in both primary and secondary care every year to raise the importance of diagnosis and proactive recommendation for effective symptom management.

We are passionate about helping those affected by dry mouth discover better ways to manage their symptoms and make life just 'that little bit more comfortable'.

To find out more, visit
www.oralieve.co.uk

The Dry Mouth Survey, now in its 3rd year, is an important part of that understanding. Listening to the concerns of dry mouth sufferers enables us to **identify new ways to reach those who may be suffering** symptoms but unaware the condition has a name, to develop new products to treat those symptoms and to be a support sufferers can turn to.

Today Oralieve is the most recommended brand for the management of dry mouth amongst healthcare professionals.*



*Amongst 2577 surveyed healthcare professionals.
Data collected online. Contact hello@oralieve.co.uk for verification.