

# Tips for the Pharmacy Team: Consulting Xerostomia Patients

- ◆ Review patient's current medications and xerostomic effects.
- ◆ Advise patient to lubricate mouth with oral moisturizing products.
- ◆ Recommend sugarless, moisturizing lozenges through out the day.
- ◆ Advise to apply lip lubricants or balms as required.
- ◆ Suggest oral moisturizing spray for quick relief.
- ◆ Recommend a small water bottle so they can take frequent sips during the day.
- ◆ Chew sugarless gum after meals.
- ◆ **Avoid alcohol and hydrogen peroxide oral rinses, as they are irritating to dry tissue.**
- ◆ Advise to avoid alcohol, carbonated and caffeine-containing drinks.
- ◆ Ice chips and sugar free popsicles can be helpful.
- ◆ If acidic juices irritate the mouth, substitute fruit-flavored drinks or milk.
- ◆ Drink liquids with meals and use gravies, sauces, yogurt, broth, margarines, and mayonnaise to make food easier to swallow.
- ◆ If it's too difficult to eat a full meal, suggest eating smaller, more frequent meals. Drink liquids with meals and use gravies, sauces, yogurt, broth, margarines, and mayonnaise to make food easier to swallow.
- ◆ Puree foods or try soft foods like macaroni and cheese, stews, mashed potatoes, soup, scrambled eggs, cottage cheese, canned fruits and vegetables, yogurt and ice cream.
- ◆ Avoid dry foods (cookies, toast and crackers), or soften them with liquids before eating.
- ◆ Avoid overly salty foods.
- ◆ Avoid chewable vitamin C tablets and acidic, sugared lozenges.
- ◆ Suggest switching "hard to swallow" medications to other available dosage forms.
- ◆ Educate patient in applicable pill crushing protocol.
- ◆ **Tablets and capsules are easier to swallow if patients drink water first, then lubricate prior to swallowing medications (with 1/2 teas.) with oral moisturizer gel or moisturizing spray (2 sprays), followed by at least half a cup of water.**
- ◆ Advise patient to conduct a daily mouth exam: check the inside of the cheeks, the roof of the mouth, gums and tongue daily for red, white or dark patches and ulcers, and to report them to their dentist/physician.
- ◆ Make recommendations for regular dental prophylaxis maintenance.
- ◆ Address smoking cessation.
- ◆ Suggest the use of a humidifier/vaporizer, especially at bedtime.

\*The information presented demonstrates that dry mouth oral care products represent a burgeoning market.

The Pharmacy Team has the opportunity to participate in this growing market by counseling the patient and promoting responsible use of quality OTC products made by reputable manufacturers.

Pharmacists can help patients achieve oral health and comfort, improve their nutritional status, prevent or minimize dental decay and periodontal disease, assist with long term management and improve the quality of life for xerostomic patients.

(References provided per request)