A Look at How OAB Meds Can Affect Your Smile

by SHARON BOYD

Overactive Bladder and Your Smile

Overactive bladder has one major oral side effect: Xerostomia, which is dry mouth. A frequent number of patients that are managing overactive bladder with prescription medications will develop dry mouth as it is a common side effect of many prescription medications. The lack of saliva flow not only makes your mouth feel uncomfortable but can also contribute to other types of oral health complications. Since approximately up to 1/3 of patients with overactive bladder will experience dry mouth, it's important to bring it to light as well as what you can do to limit the effects it has on your smile.

It Increases the Risk of Tooth Decay

Saliva serves as a lubricant as well as a natural cleansing mechanism of the mouth. When teeth are too dry throughout the day, acids, plaque and food particles can destroy tooth enamel at a much quicker pace. The enamel becomes decalcified and incipient (first stage) lesions of tooth decay begin to develop. If left untreated, they become full-blown cavities throughout the entire mouth.

Regular dental checkups can make sure that decalcified areas are caught as soon as possible, or at the very least cavities are treated in their smallest stages. It's recommended that you have a professional fluoride application placed on your teeth at every cleaning appointment so that weak areas can become recalcified and deter tooth decay. Your dentist will also likely prescribe a strong fluoride gel or rinse to use at home each day.

It's Linked with Bad Breath

Halitosis (bad breath) can also develop if the mouth is dry. This is due to a buildup of odorous particles inside the mouth, around the teeth and under the gums. Take care not to cover this up with mouthwash, as many over-the-counter rinses contain alcohol and will only dry your mouth out more. Instead, choose an alcohol-free rinse, or just a few drops of essential oils in a cup of water to rinse with. Remember that oral hygiene is the first step to removing these odorous bacteria, and it should be the most important step. That being said, using essential oils after brushing can leave your mouth feeling fresh and minty for a few hours. Just be careful not to use too much, otherwise, it may create a burning sensation.

It Can Cause Discomfort

Xerostomia can make your mouth uncomfortable during the day, or even make it feel painful to eat food. Do your best to keep your mouth lubricated by drinking plenty of water, chewing gum with xylitol to help spur new saliva production (as well as deter decay), and ask your dentist about lubricating mouth rinses. Some patients do like these types of rinses, but other people find them too "slimy" for their preferences.

See Your Dentist on a Routine Basis

The best way to avoid complications from dry mouth is to have regular preventive care visits with your dentist. Even if you hate going to the dentist, these frequent visits will help pinpoint needs when they are at their earliest stages, when they are easier (and less expensive) to treat.