

# Oral Health

## The Whole “Tooth” About Meds and Your Mouth

Taking part in a program such as the North Shore Keep Well Society is a wonderful way to build a healthy lifestyle as we “mature” into our senior years. On occasion, we do require help either from our Physician, Dentist, or other Health Care Professional in the form of different medications including various drugs, vitamins (chewable as well), minerals and herbal supplements; these can potentially have negative effects on our general and oral health.

Always let your dental office know about your recent medical history, including prescribed and over-the-counter medications, as these could cause unwanted side effects. A few of these include:

**Soft tissue reactions** - inflammation or discolouration of your mouth soft tissues, or mouth sores. For instance, if you take blood pressure meds, chemotherapeutic or immunosuppressive agents and develop a reaction, your Dentist may be able to suggest an oral hygiene regimen to limit discomfort caused by oral ulcers or inflammation.

**Taste-altering Medications** - included are drugs used to stop smoking, cardiovascular agents, central nervous system stimulants, respiratory inhalants, and non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs to relieve pain. Some cause your taste to be affected. E.g. a bitter or metallic taste.

**Abnormal bleeding** - aspirin, blood thinning drugs like warfarin, which you may be taking to prevent a stroke or heart disease, cause reduced blood clotting efficiency. Always inform your Dentist if you are taking these meds, as they could cause abnormal bleeding during any oral surgical procedure involving any soft tissues.

**Gum tissue abnormalities** - if you are taking immunosuppressants after an organ transplant, anti-seizure drugs like phenytoin, or calcium channel blockers for some heart maladies, they can cause gum tissue enlargement.

**Dry mouth** - a common side effect after drugs like antihistamines, high blood pressure meds, decongestants, muscle relaxants, urinary incontinence drugs, Parkinson's disease medications, antidepressants and others are taken. The drying effect causes inflammation and increased susceptibility to infection and bleeding. Saliva is thought of as Nature's "car wash", moistening and ridding mouth tissues of debris and reducing incidents of tooth decay.

**Oral fungal infections** (Candidiasis) - commonly called Thrush, can occur when oral asthma inhalers are used. Rinsing with water after use is encouraged.

**Another important fact:** Sugars are often used in liquid cough medications to improve pleasantness -cough syrups, antacid tablets, vitamins, and anti-fungal drugs are examples. All of these promote dental decay. Whenever possible use products with sugar substitutes. Try to ingest the meds with food and/or flush with lots of water, unless contraindicated.

**\*Important** - when taking cancer medications, inform your Dentist of oral and injection medications you are on; he/she will likely recommend that any necessary oral remedial procedures be performed prior to inception of consuming drugs which may affect your teeth, gums, or jaw bone.

**\*Important** - your oral home care should be the very best you can muster up while you are on these products. This will reduce inflammation, giving the rest of your body a leg up on healing. Regular dental checkups are a must!

**SUBMITTED BY DR. ROBERT CLARKE, D.M.D.**