



# HEALTH AWARENESS

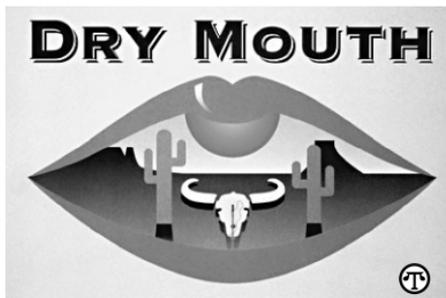
## Drought in Your Mouth?

(NAPSA)—Dry mouth is a medical condition that doesn't receive a great deal of attention. But if you're among the thousands of people who suffer from chronic dryness of the mouth, you know how unpleasant, annoying and even dangerous it can be.

"It can seriously mar the quality of life," notes Dr. Bruce Baum of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an expert on salivary (saliva-producing) gland disorders. "Dry mouth can lead to cavities, mouth sores and infections; chewing, speaking and swallowing difficulties; and other problems. The good news is that there are therapeutic options that can often successfully deal with this symptom."

Dry mouth comes about when the salivary glands don't work properly. It is a common side effect of many medicines, including those for high blood pressure and depression. Long-lasting mouth dryness may also be the result of head and neck radiation treatments, chemotherapy, nerve damage, stress, or diseases such as diabetes, AIDS, Parkinson's disease and Sjögren's (pronounced "SHOW-grens") Syndrome, a disorder in which the person's own immune system targets moisture-producing glands and causes dryness in the mouth and eyes. Contrary to popular belief, dry mouth is not a normal part of aging.

There is currently no cure for severe salivary gland damage. Dr. Baum and his colleagues have been working on novel approaches, including using gene transfer methods and trying to develop an artificial salivary gland. "Based on the results of our studies thus far," Dr. Baum says, "I am optimistic that we or others



will be able to help these patients in the not too distant future." However, such therapies are still being tested in the laboratory and are not yet ready for patients.

In the meantime, certain treatments may help some people with dry mouth. Dr. Baum advises chewing sugarless gum or candy and drinking lots of fluid to keep your mouth moist. Talk to your doctor or dentist about the medicines you are taking. Many drugs, such as those used to treat high blood pressure and depression, cause dry mouth. You may need to have your dosage adjusted or your medicine changed. Ask your doctor or dentist about prescription medicines that may help the salivary glands function better, and about the possibility of using artificial saliva to keep your mouth wet. When you eat, sip water or other non-caffeinated drinks to make chewing and swallowing easier. Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine, all of which dry out the mouth. Lastly, try putting a humidifier in your bedroom.

To receive more information about dry mouth from NIH's National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), visit <http://www.nohic.nidcr.nih.gov/pubs/drymouth/dmouth.htm>, call 301-402-7364, or write to The National Oral Information Clearinghouse, 1 NOHIC Way, Bethesda, MD, 20892-3500.