

Quick Poll Results: How Often—and How—Do You Treat Dry Mouth?

Dry mouth, or xerostomia, is a multifactorial oral condition characterized by loss of salivary function. Most dentists (98 percent) attribute medication use as a common cause for dry mouth, according to the 327 respondents of the November 2015 Quick Poll. However, 71–74 percent of respondents attributed autoimmune disorders and radiation therapy to be important causes as well.

Identifying and treating the underlying causes of dry mouth are essential to providing optimal oral health care. A majority of respondents (89–96 percent) identify patients with dry mouth in their clinic from either patient self-report or via a clinical examination. Some identify patients by reviewing their medical history (65 percent) and their caries history (69 percent).

Most respondents (85 percent) prescribe oral rinses to alleviate dry mouth symptoms. Other common treatment choices were:

- Increasing water consumption—82%
- Gum—63%
- Lozenges—62%
- Sprays—55%

Southwest Region members frequently cite xerostomia as an area of interest, so they developed this Quick Poll at their 2015 Regional Meeting. Among respondents, 47 percent were “somewhat unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with their ability to treat their patients with dry mouth. Almost 50 percent were either “neutral” or “somewhat satisfied.” The remaining respondents (<5%) were “very satisfied.” This indicates that dentists are often challenged when diagnosing and treating patients with dry mouth; this may be an important topic for further research.

To continue the conversation about xerostomia diagnosis and treatment, please visit the Quick Polls Results thread in the [Member Forum](#).

