

## Tips for What Can You Do

### General Tips for Eye Care

- Don't use artificial tears that irritate your eyes. If one brand or prescription bothers you, try another. Nonpreserved drops are usually essential for long-term use.
- Practice blinking: You tend to blink less when reading or using the computer. Remember to blink 5 to 6 times a minute.
- Protect your eyes from drafts, breezes, and wind.
- Put humidifiers in the rooms where you spend the most time, including the bedroom, or install a humidifier in your heating and air conditioning unit.
- Don't smoke, and stay out of smoky rooms.
- Apply mascara only to the tips of your lashes so it doesn't get in your eyes. If you use eyeliner or eye shadow, put it only on the skin above your lashes, not on the sensitive skin under your lashes, close to your eyes. Avoid facial creams on the lower lid skin at bedtime if you are awakening with eye irritation.
- Ask your doctor whether any medications that you are taking contribute to dryness. If they do, ask how the dryness can be reduced.

## The Importance of Oral Hygiene

Saliva is important in maintaining good oral health. When you have decreased saliva flow, oral health can suffer. Here's what you can do to prevent or reduce cavities and infections if you have dry mouth.

- Visit a dentist regularly, at least twice a year, to have your teeth examined and cleaned.
- Brush your teeth or rinse your mouth with water several times a day. Avoid regular use of mouthwash that contains alcohol, because alcohol is drying.
- Use toothpaste containing fluoride to gently brush your teeth, gums, and tongue after each meal and before bedtime.
- Always floss and brush your teeth before going to bed.
- Choose sugar-free snacks and avoid all soda. If you do eat or drink sugary foods, brush or rinse your teeth immediately afterward.
- See a dentist if you notice anything unusual in your mouth.
- Speak with your dentist about the benefits of fluorides and whether you are getting the proper type and amount.

### Protect Your Voice

People with Sjögren's syndrome can develop hoarseness if their vocal cords become inflamed as part of the disease or become irritated from throat dryness or coughing.

To prevent further strain on your vocal cords:

- Try not to clear your throat before speaking.
- Instead, take a sip of water, chew sugar-free gum, or suck on sugar-free candy.
- Make an "h" sound, hum, or laugh to gently bring the vocal cords together so you can get sound out.
- Clearing your throat does the same thing, but it's hard on the vocal cords, and you want to avoid irritating them further.

## Medicines and Dryness

Certain drugs can contribute to eye and mouth dryness. If you take any of the drugs listed below, ask your doctor whether they could be causing symptoms. However, don't stop taking them without asking your doctor – he or she may already have adjusted the dose to help protect you against drying side effects or chosen a drug that's least likely to cause dryness.

Drugs that can cause dryness include:

- antihistamines
- decongestants
- diuretics
- some antidiarrhea drugs
- some antipsychotic drugs
- tranquilizers
- some blood pressure medicines
- antidepressants.