

## DRY MOUTH

*Please read this information sheet. If you have any questions, particularly about the treatment or potential side-effects, please ask Professor.*

- Saliva helps swallowing, talking, and taste, and protects the mouth
- Where saliva is reduced there is a risk of dental decay (caries), halitosis, altered taste, mouth soreness and infections
- Saliva may be reduced by radiotherapy or chemotherapy, various drugs, after bone marrow transplant, in diabetes, in some viral infections, in anxiety/stress/depression, or in salivary gland disorders.
- Diagnosis is clinical but investigations *may* be indicated, including
  - *Blood tests*
  - *Eye tests*
  - *Urinalysis*
  - *Salivary flow rate tests (sialometry)*
  - *Salivary gland biopsy (labial gland biopsy)* - under local anaesthesia, of small glands *inside* the lower lip. It is simple, quick and has few long-term adverse effects except occasional minor numbness.
  - *X-rays or scans*
    - *Chest radiograph*
    - *Sialography*
    - *Scintiscanning*
    - *Ultrasound*

*A patient has the right under common law to give or withhold consent to medical examination of treatment. This is one of the basic principles of health care. Patients are entitled to receive sufficient information in a way they can understand about the proposed treatments, the possible alternatives and any substantial risk or risks which may be special in kind or magnitude or special to the patient, so that they can make a balanced judgement. (UK Health Dept. 19.2.99. HSC 1999/031)*

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February 2005