

Hepatitis C symptom #4:

Dryness

dry eyes and a dry mouth

Hepatitis C can affect the body's natural moisture levels. This can lead to dry eyes or a dry mouth. Dryness of the eyes and mouth can be very uncomfortable and can lead to other problems.

Treatment for hepatitis C is also known to cause dryness.

Dry eyes:

Dry eyes are often caused by a lack of tears or inflammation of the glands that produce tears. Tears keep the surface of the eyes smooth and clear, and protect eyes from infection. Dry eye symptoms can worsen in certain situations, such as in windy climates or because of air conditioning. Symptoms can also be worse when using your eyes for a long period of time, such as looking at a computer screen for a few hours or reading. People may find symptoms become worse at the end of the day.

Symptoms of dry eyes can include:

- eye sensitivity
- eye irritation
- eye redness
- blurred vision
- a burning or itching feeling
- feeling like something is in your eye.

Dry mouth:

Hepatitis C infection can cause a dry mouth and mouth ulcers. Although sources disagree on how many people with hepatitis C are affected, health care professionals recognise that many people living with hepatitis C do experience a dry mouth (known clinically as xerostomia).

A dry mouth happens when your saliva glands do not produce enough saliva to keep your mouth moist, or the quality of the saliva decreases. This can cause problems because our saliva plays an important role. Saliva moistens and cleanses the mouth, helps process food and prevents infection.

As well as discomfort, the lack of saliva can cause ulcers, bad breath, affect speech and swallowing, increase bacteria in the mouth and cause dental problems, such as tooth decay or tooth sensitivity in the long term.

Symptoms of a dry mouth can include:

- bad breath
- cracked lips
- problems with speaking
- frequent thirst
- a sore mouth and throat
- difficulty eating and swallowing
- sticky, dry feeling in the mouth
- sores or split skin at the corners of the mouth
- burning or tingling sensation in the mouth, especially on the tongue.

Avoid smoke, direct wind and air conditioning when possible.



Deliberately blink more often to moisten the eyes.



Consider using a humidifier, particularly in winter.



Try using eye ointments or eye drops. Talk about the use of eye ointments with your doctor or pharmacist.

Use pharmacy oral health products designed to ease discomfort and heal ulcers. These include mouthwash, toothpaste, moisturiser gel and teething gels. Talk to your pharmacist about what is best for you.



Tips for handling dry eyes and a dry mouth

Chew sugar-free gum to stimulate saliva.



Avoid caffeine, tobacco and alcohol because they all dry the mouth.



Try rinsing the mouth with salty water and gargling with mild mouthwash.



Avoid hot or spicy foods as they can irritate a dry mouth. Choose soft, mashed or minced foods if eating is painful.

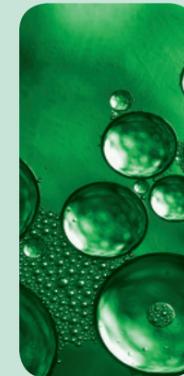


Visit your dentist regularly.



Use lip balm.

Sip water regularly to keep mouth moist and stay well hydrated.



Maintain good oral hygiene by regularly brushing and flossing, particularly after meals and before bed.



If you continue to have problems with dryness, speak to your health provider. There may be a prescription medication that could help.