How Medicine May Affect Your Mouth

Whether you’re taking prescription drugs or herbal supplements, medication can take a toll on your teeth.

**Dry mouth**
A decrease in saliva increases your risk of oral infections and tooth decay.
*Caused by:* antidepressants, antihistamines, asthma inhalers, diuretics, anti-anxiety drugs, anticonvulsants, decongestants, muscle relaxants, narcotic painkillers

**Overgrowth of gum tissue**
Gingival enlargement causes painful, inflamed gums that grow over the teeth.
*Caused by:* anti-seizure medications, immunosuppressant drugs given after organ transplants, calcium channel blockers (used to treat high blood pressure, migraines and Raynaud’s syndrome)

**Cavities**
Sugar in medication can put your teeth at risk.
*Caused by:* cough syrups, cough drops, vitamins, antacid tablets, liquid medications

**Mouth ulcers**
These painful sores generally appear on the inside of the cheeks.
*Caused by:* ibuprofen, aspirin, beta blockers (used to prevent heart attacks and treat hypertension), nicorandil (used to treat chest pain), penicillin, chemotherapy drugs

**Loss of bone tissue**
By leaching minerals from your bone, some medications can increase your chance of losing teeth.
*Caused by:* bisphosphonates (used to treat cancer and prevent osteoporosis), antacids that contain aluminum, steroids, anti-seizure medications, antidepressants, hormone blockers (used to treat hormone-linked cancers and endometriosis)

**Thrush**
Yeast infections of the mouth appear as white fungus on the tongue and throat.
*Caused by:* antibiotics, birth control pills, corticosteroids

**Abnormal bleeding**
Blood-thinning medications can cause problems during oral surgery, gum treatment or even flossing.
*Caused by:* aspirin, anti-stroke and heart disease medications

Your dentist will be able to help you minimize these side effects and prevent damage to your oral health. Always give your dentist a complete list of medications you’re taking, both prescription and over-the-counter.