

What causes excessive saliva and drooling?

Excessive saliva occurs when the muscles typically used for swallowing weaken and saliva accumulates in the mouth. When there is weakening of the facial and/or swallowing muscles, patients may experience drooling. This is a common symptom in patients with ALS. Depending on the amount of saliva and/or frequency of drooling, patients may consider medication management. Patients who are choking on saliva should speak to their provider regarding methods to prevent aspiration.

Medication Options

There are a handful of medications that can be used to treat excessive saliva. Management of saliva is patient specific, and sometimes patients may need to trial multiple medications until they find one that works for them. Medication forms range from drops that are placed under the tongue to liquids, tablets, patches, and injections. It is important to discuss medication options and side effects with your doctor.

Medication Side Effects

Most of the drugs prescribed are from a drug class called anticholinergics, so they tend to have the same side effect profile. Some of the most common side effects include:

- dry mouth
- drying of secretions/thick phlegm production
- constipation
- difficulty with urination
- blurred vision
- confusion
- dizziness
- rapid heart rate

Botox Injections

Botulinum toxin (Botox) is considered when medication has failed to manage excessive saliva. Botox is considered an effective method for treatment of drooling in patients with ALS. The medication works by temporarily disrupting the signal between the nerve and gland that is responsible for producing saliva.

It is important to evaluate if the saliva is a thin consistency or thick mucus since the treatment of these two symptoms is different.

Injections are done by a provider in the salivary glands located around the jaw. It consists of four to six small injections total. Patients typically notice a decrease in their saliva production within three days. The full effects of the medication take place in approximately two weeks. Patients usually require repeat injections every three months to manage their symptoms.

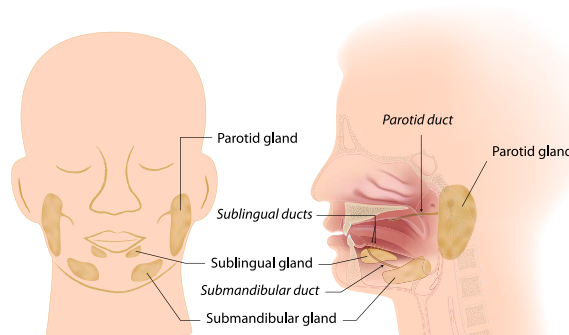
Benefits

- Quick procedure, usually under two minutes.
- May eliminate the need to take other medications.
- Tends to have less side effects than other treatment options.
- No major drug interactions.

Side Effects

- Dry mouth, bruising, difficulty swallowing, and bleeding.
- Requires repeat injections.

The Salivary Glands



Suction Device

A suction device uses suction to manually remove saliva and/or phlegm from inside and around the mouth. It is much like the device that is used during a dental cleaning.

There are battery and portable options available, so this device can be transported for use outside of the home.

