

**Special Feature**

## Dealing with dry mouth

*Many people experience dry mouth during treatment for a variety of cancers. Becki Murphy discusses treatments and remedies that she has found helpful.*

In the case of head and neck cancers that have been treated with extensive radiotherapy, dry mouth can often be long-term or even, as in my own situation, a lifetime condition due to the loss of the saliva gland function. Over the past two-and-a-half years I have tried many different ways of coping with chronic dry mouth and would like to share some tips, which I hope will help others who are experiencing either temporary or permanent dry mouth.

### Seek advice from your doctor and dentist

There are many products on the market to treat dry mouth. These include prescription drugs; oral treatments such as gels, sprays, mouthwashes and gums; and herbal, alternative or even "folk" remedies. Because every case is different and unique, it is important to discuss your condition with your doctor and dentist before trying any of these treatments. As it is impossible to review all the different products and tips that are available, I shall limit my discussion to those I have found helpful.



*Water - never underestimate this most simple and easily available option.*

First and foremost, WATER! Never underestimate this the most simple, healthy and easily available option. I always carry water with me and sip constantly. At night there is water next to my bed. I never leave home, answer the phone, eat or even go from one room to the next without taking some with me. I find that taking small sips and holding it in my mouth for a few seconds before swallowing helps hydrate my mouth.

Proprietary products can be very helpful. One very satisfying range I have discovered includes toothpaste and mouthwash that are the best I have tried, and are particularly helpful at night before going to bed. They contain no alcohol or menthol, both of which are very drying of the mouth and

throat. They are also mild and have a pleasant flavour, which is very important as dry mouth can cause the mouth to be sensitive and have a sour taste. I find that they seem to stimulate the few saliva glands I still have and therefore keep my mouth moist a little longer.

### Why it's important to brush your teeth frequently

When saliva glands are not working it is very important to keep the mouth clean since one of saliva's functions is to clean the mouth. So brush your teeth frequently. Using this product, which is mild and specially designed for dry mouth, I don't need to worry that I may irritate my mouth or teeth through frequent brushing. The same range includes a dental adhesive that can be very effective without causing irritation.

There is also a gel I occasionally use before bedtime if my mouth is feeling particularly dry. However, a product I have found suits me better is a herbal-based spray that I ordered through my pharmacist. This product is covered by the medical card scheme with a prescription from your dentist or doctor.

While I found these products very helpful, they may not suit everyone so remember to talk to your doctor, dentist or pharmacist about those treatments that best suit you and your individual situation.

• If you or any member of your family is undergoing, about to undergo or is living with the after effects of neck or throat cancer treatment, and you would like to share information, support or ideas about any aspect of your experience, you can contact Becki Murphy through BCSC. ♥



*When saliva glands don't work keep your mouth clean by regularly brushing your teeth.*

**Fundraising News**

## BCSC now on mycharity.ie

Supporters of BCSC can now make online donations to the Centre following a decision to subscribe to the website mycharity.ie. Dedicated to making it as safe and simple as possible to raise funds, mycharity.ie offers charities an online presence and the ability to securely accept donations direct from the public online. The site additionally offers fundraisers the opportunity to create their own unique, customised page for any event, which can then be used to publicise their efforts to colleagues, family, relatives and friends. To donate to BCSC through the site, visit [www.mycharity.ie](http://www.mycharity.ie) ♥

## Women's Mini Marathon

BCSC is making its annual appeal for women to take part as sponsored runners on its behalf in the 2008 Flora Women's Mini Marathon on the June Bank Holiday, Monday 2nd June next. Both a key fundraising event and a great social occasion, the Mini Marathon is a highlight of the Centre's year. If you would like to be part of it, contact us for full details, including information about our regular training sessions. (Tel: 01-286 6966 or email: [bcsc@iol.ie](mailto:bcsc@iol.ie)). ♥



## Our Lug team does it again!

Participation by over 130 climbers insured that last autumn's annual sponsored climb of Mount Lugnaquilla was once again a tremendous success. BCSC would like to thank all those who took part in the Lug Challenge, which continues to be a key event on our fundraising calendar. ♥

## BCSC joins People in Need

The boot was on the other foot when clients and friends of BCSC raised €280.40 during last autumn's annual People in Need Telethon. In a separate event, BCSC raised €150 during the annual coffee morning in aid of Blackrock Hospice. ♥

## Pedal power does it again

A record number of cyclists raised thousands of euro for BCSC in last autumn's annual Joe Loughman Randonnée organised by Bray Wheelers Cycling Club. Over 130 cyclists took part in the charity cycle, which followed Route de Chill Mhantáin through some of the county's most scenic countryside. BCSC would like to thank all those involved for their support. ♥

## An Appealing Vista

Top local bluegrass and country band Bray Vista and special guest Bree Harris drew a crowd of over 200 to the Martello on the town's seafront for a very successful fundraising gig in aid of BCSC. ♥