

How to Massage Salivary Glands

The SSF thanks Ava J. Wu, DDS for authoring this Patient Education Sheet. Dr. Wu is a Clinical Professor and Co-Director of the Salivary Gland Dysfunction Clinic, School of Dentistry, University of California, San Francisco.

If a sharp and stabbing pain occurs in one of your salivary glands right before or while eating or drinking, the cause might be an obstruction (a stone or mucous plug). In rare cases, associated gland swelling can accompany the discomfort. Here are some tips for massaging or “milking” the gland that might help:



Figure 1A:

The parotid glands are located bilaterally in the cheek area in front of your ear and have a “tail” area that can extend over the lower jaw.

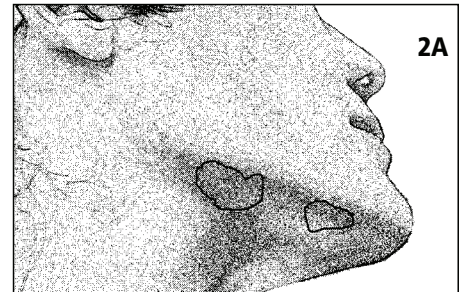


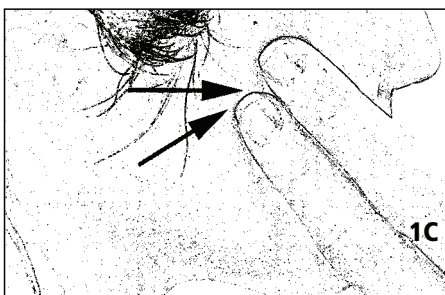
Figure 2A:

The submandibular and sublingual glands are located bilaterally under your jaw and tongue with the sublingual gland closer to the chin.



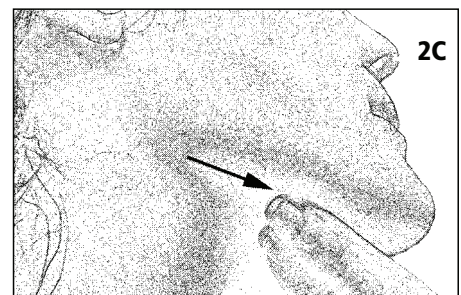
Figures 1B and 2B:

Place two fingers on the body or tail area of the parotid or under the jaw for the submandibular/sublingual glands.



Figures 1C and 2C:

Sweep fingers forward with gentle pressure as indicated by the black arrows. This will encourage movement of saliva past a possible obstruction or constriction and into the oral cavity.



Additional Tips:

- Stay well hydrated to encourage the flow of saliva through the gland.
- Temporarily avoid foods and beverages that cause the pain and possible swelling.
- Apply warm compresses to the area to increase comfort.
- Ibuprofen may be taken temporarily to decrease pain and inflammation.
- Talk to your doctor about use of a mucolytic agent for 5-10 days to thin the saliva and allow it to easily pass through the salivary ducts.

In all cases of salivary gland swelling and associated pain a medical professional should be consulted as soon as possible to determine the cause.

For more information on Sjögren's syndrome contact the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation at:
 6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 325, Bethesda, MD 20817 • 800-475-6473 • www.sjogrens.org • ssf@sjogrens.org.