



Patient Education Sheet

Dental Tips

The SSF thanks Philip C. Fox, DDS, for authoring this Patient Education Sheet. Dr. Fox is President, PC Fox Consulting LLC. During his 22-year tenure at the National Institutes of Health, he launched the Sjögren's Syndrome Clinic and served as a Chief of the Clinical Investigations Section, Gene Therapy and Therapeutics Branch, as Director of the Oral Medicine Training Program, and as Clinical Director of the Intramural Research Program, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. He also is a Member and Counselor, SSF Medical and Scientific Advisory Board, and past SSF President.

Due to alterations in salivary function, Sjögren's syndrome patients have many dental problems. They have been found to require a greater number of dental visits, to have more decay and restorative needs, and to spend a significant amount more (2 to 3 times) on dental care.

► **In order to maintain the best oral health and minimize expense, you should:**

- Schedule dental examinations regularly – at least twice a year.
- Brush your teeth after every meal. Prompt removal of food debris will minimize decay. Rinse your mouth with plain water if you don't have time to brush.
- Use dental floss daily.
- Use a toothpaste containing fluoride. Discuss with your dentist using supplemental fluoride, either as a daily rinse or gel in a carrier or applied in the dental office.
- Brush your tongue with a toothbrush or tongue-scraper. Buy an electric toothbrush.
- Avoid sugary, sticky foods which promote decay-causing bacteria.
- Do not wear removable dental prostheses at night, and clean and soak them in an anti-fungal preparation daily.
- Discuss with your dentist the use of a remineralizing product to help prevent decay.
- Eat a healthful diet low in refined sugars and avoid carbohydrate-rich between-meal snacks.
- Use products to stimulate salivation (such as gums or candies) or to promote oral comfort but be certain they are sugar-free and contain xylitol as a sweetener.
- Don't smoke – cigarettes, cigars or pipes – or use chewing tobacco.
- Take advantage of fluoride-containing and -releasing dental restorative materials.
- Check the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation Product Directory – free of charge to all members – to see available products.

For more information on Sjögren's syndrome, visit the SSF Web site at www.sjogrens.org, call 800-475-6473, email ssf@sjogrens.org or write to the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation, 6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 325, Bethesda, MD 20817.

Clinicians: Please make multiple copies of this Patient Education Sheet and distribute to your patients. If you have an idea for a topic or want to author a Patient Education Sheet, contact us at sq@sjogrens.org.