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## Guidelines for Management of Secretions/Saliva

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- Saliva may be thin, or thick and stringy.
- Buildup of thin saliva contributes to coughing/choking and/or drooling – typically a result of less frequent swallowing due to weak lip, tongue and throat muscles.
- Thick secretions typically block the throat and are difficult to cough up due to weak breath force and weak throat muscles.

**For thin saliva control**, the goals are to reduce production of saliva, dry up the saliva, or remove excess saliva. Some suggestions that have proven helpful in providing relief are:

- Conscious swallowing to clear saliva
- Postural changes in bed, e.g., raise head of bed; lie on side to allow saliva to drain from mouth
- Neck Support Collar
- Oral suctioning with a portable suction machine using a Yankaur suction tip. These machines are supplied through ProResp. Consult Respiratory Therapist regarding this option.
- Decongestants used for colds and allergies, available over the counter at pharmacy
- Transderm-V/Scopolamine patch - available over the counter at pharmacy
- Medications on prescription by a physician, e.g., Amitriptyline, Atropine drops
- Botox – consult Neurologist or Registered Nurse for referral

**For thick mucous control**, the goal is to thin the mucous so that it can be more easily swallowed.

Some suggestions that have proven helpful in providing relief are:

- Adequate hydration by drinking water (2L/day)
- Sucking on crushed ice if you have no swallowing difficulties
- Avoidance of caffeinated drinks and alcohol
- Hot tea with lemon, apple juice or pineapple juice
- Expectorants, e.g., cough syrups such as Benylin without DM (dextromethorphan) – thins out mucus and phlegm so that you can expel it when you cough
- Enzyme called Papase (a papaya extract) that can be found in papaya juice, papaya tablets, or in some meat tenderizers (available at Health Food Stores). Mix meat tenderizers with a little bit of water and place on or under the tongue with a cotton swab.
- Steam inhalation/humidification
- Medications on prescription by doctor, e.g., SSKI (potassium iodide)

**For dry mouth**, some suggestions include:

- Adequate hydration by drinking water (2L/day)
- Symptom-relief over-the-counter medications:
  - Biotene – can be purchased at your local drug store; lasts for about an hour or two
  - BioXtra Products – can only be purchased online at this time (<https://www.bioxtra.ca/>)
  - Mouth Kote - can be purchased at your local drug store
  - XyliMelts – use this only if you have no swallowing difficulties

**It requires some trial and error to find the right balance between saliva that is too thin and hard to control versus saliva that is too thick and difficult to clear.**