Gum Up

February 1, 2004

Sometimes my mouth is so dry—I assume it's from my meds—that my lips almost stick to my teeth and I have trouble talking (not to mention bad breath). Water doesn't keep my mouth moist and candies worsen my thrush. Chewing gum wets my whistle and lets me talk to people without worrying that I'm breathing fumes in their face. [For more on dry mouth, see "Watch Your Mouth," *POZ*, January 2004.]

Brands like Dentyne have gone "icy," burning my mouth, which is tender from all my meds, and making my nose run. So I chew sugarless Juicy Fruit. The sweetness helps settle my stomach when I'm nauseous. [It's only available in Canada; statesiders can buy other sugar-free brands.] I like the chiclets—they have more flavor and hold their texture longer than the sticks.

Someone who isn't positive once told me, "My mother taught me that ladies don't chew gum." I've learned over the years that *ladies with AIDS do.*

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