

Why is my patient drooling?

Drooling, or hypersalivation, is occasionally seen in a poisoned patient. It is an uncommon finding and one that can aid in diagnosis. Drooling occurs when there is an increase in the production of saliva or inability to retain or swallow saliva. The following are some of the more common toxicological causes of drooling.

- **Dystonic reactions** can occur with a wide variety of medications when taken in therapeutic doses or in overdoses. Dystonic reactions are associated with the inability to swallow saliva and therefore drooling.
- **Ketamine and phencyclidine (PCP)** use has been associated with drooling. Although the mechanism is unclear, it is probable that these drugs stimulate salivation.
- **Organophosphate and carbamate insecticides** are acetylcholinesterase inhibitors. Exposure to organophosphates or carbamates by any route results in an accumulation of acetylcholine and excess stimulation of muscarinic receptors. Salivation occurs along with lacrimation, urination, defecation and miosis. Contrary to popular belief, these muscarinic signs do not always appear in the early stages of poisoning nor predominate.
- **Caustics** cause irritation and burns of mucous membranes and difficulty in swallowing leading to excess saliva. Ingestion of household and commercial cleaners or chemicals containing alkaline corrosives can result in significant burns in the mouth and/or esophagus. Children, in particular, drool profusely when it is painful to swallow. Ingestion of a disc battery can also result in drooling if the battery is lodged in the esophagus, breaks open and dispels its caustic contents.
- **Tetrodotoxin** is found in the flesh of some fish, salamanders, newts and toads. Drooling occurs as a result of neurological dysfunction.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...Acetadote® (acetylcysteine) injection is now available?

Acetadote® is an FDA-approved intravenous form of acetylcysteine indicated for acetaminophen overdose. Cumberland Pharmaceuticals is shipping Acetadote® to wholesale drug outlets beginning May 25, 2004. It will be available for purchase by hospitals as soon as it reaches wholesalers. Call the Maryland Poison Center for more information on Acetadote® or to schedule an inservice on the use of Acetadote®.



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