

## Dry Mouth and Lips

Patients on hospice often experience dry mouth and lips. This may be from long periods of resting with their mouth open or dehydration from not being able to drink or keep down enough fluid.

### For dry lips

- Gently apply lip balm (like Chapstick®) or a layer of petroleum jelly (like Vaseline®). If the patient is using oxygen, use a non-petroleum based lip balm.
- For dried secretions on lips, use a warm, moist towel and gently dab to dampen them until they can be easily wiped away.

### For dry mouth

- Offer frequent sips of water throughout the day, from a glass, a sippy cup, or a straw. Experiment to find what works best and is most comfortable.
- For those with difficulty swallowing, place a very small chip of ice in their mouth to melt on the tongue. Offer as needed, but make sure the ice chip is small enough to avoid choking.
- Try using oral mouth swabs (like Toothettes®), which are small sponges on a stick that can be moistened with water and gently placed inside the mouth. They can be found over the counter at drugstores. If you have difficulty finding them, ask your hospice care team.