

## What is Saliva (Spit)?

Pull a lollipop out of your mouth and you'll see it. Wake up after drooling on your pillow and you'll feel it. That's right, it's spit, also known as saliva (say: suh-LIE-vuh).

**Saliva** is a clear liquid that's made in your mouth 24 hours a day, every day. It's made up mostly of water, with a few other chemicals. The slippery stuff is produced by the salivary (say: SAL-uh-vair-ee) glands. These glands are found on the inside of each cheek, on the bottom of the mouth, and under the jaw at the very front of the mouth. They secrete (say: sih-KREET), or ooze, about 2 to 4 pints (or about 1 to 2 litres) of spit into your mouth every day!

**Spit** is super for lots of reasons. Saliva wets food and makes it easier to swallow. Without saliva, a grilled cheese sandwich would be dry and difficult to gulp down. It also helps the tongue by allowing you to taste. A dry tongue can't tell how things taste — it needs saliva to keep it wet.

**Spit** helps begin the process of [digestion](#) (say: dy-JES-chun), too. Before food hits your stomach, saliva starts to break it down while the food's still in your mouth. It does this with the help of enzymes (say: EN-zimes), special chemicals found in the saliva. The combination of chewing food and coating it with saliva makes the tongue's job a bit easier — it can push wet, chewed food toward the throat more easily.

**Saliva** also cleans the inside of your mouth and rinses your teeth to help keep them clean. (But remember that spit isn't enough to keep teeth in tip-top shape; you still need to brush and floss!) The enzymes in saliva also help to fight off infections in the mouth.

Most school-age kids have just the right amount of saliva. Sometimes a person may not have enough saliva, but this is usually the result of certain medicines or treatments, some kinds of diseases, or old age.