Composition and Function of Saliva
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Do you know that saliva has a critical role to play in the human body, yet it is taken for granted? It is evident from various studies that saliva is involved in oral tissue maintenance and preservation. However, it is not paid much attention because of its involvement in the small amount. Saliva is a slightly acidic liquid secretion produced by the salivary glands present in the mouth. These glands are present in three regions inside a mouth cavity: behind the ears (parotid glands), under the tongue (sublingual glands), and at the base of the mouth (submandibular glands).

Cellular composition of saliva suggests the presence of three types of cells: duct system cells present in huge amounts, myoepithelial cells, and acinar cells. Chemical composition of saliva suggests the presence of various electrolytes such as magnesium, calcium, bicarbonate, potassium, sodium, and phosphate (Humphrey & Williamson, 2001). Other major components present in the saliva are proteins, including immunoglobulins, enzymes, mucins, and various nitrogenous substances, including ammonia and urea. All of these components have specific roles to play, which in turn help saliva perform its function. PH and buffer capacity of saliva is maintained by the presence of bicarbonates, phosphates, and urea. Mucus and proteins serve to adhere to the surface of microorganisms and trap them. Antimicrobial action is provided with the help of Immunoglobulins and other enzymes. The combined action of proteins, phosphate, and calcium serves to give anti-solubility factors to regulate remineralization and demineralization (Almeida et al., 2008).

Saliva serves five major functions in the body that are mainly related to the maintenance of oral health. Besides the major function of taste and digestion that you are already familiar with, saliva serves to protect the body with its antimicrobial activity. Moreover, it is involved in maintaining tissue integrity. According to a few studies, certain medications are thought to have side effects on the production of saliva, consequently resulting in saliva dysfunction (Humphrey & Williamson, 2001).

**References**

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