

Introduction

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The parotid, submandibular and sublingual glands are the three paired major salivary glands; the minor salivary glands are multiple and situated mainly in the lips, buccal mucosa, tongue and palate, but they can be present anywhere along the aerodigestive tract. Obstructive and inflammatory conditions, tumours and autoimmune-mediated conditions affect these glands. Saliva is an important secretion that performs a number of essential functions, such as clearing substances from the mouth, maintaining pH and tooth mineralisation and influencing the oral microbiome, which protects the body and helps with wound healing. Moreover, saliva not only neutralises some harmful dietary components but also lubricates and hydrates oral mucosal surfaces. This has been the topic of study for centuries, with the oldest reference to salivary glands, and more specifically to saliva, found in clay tablets at the Akka Library, which was created by the Assyrian King Assurbanipal from old Mesopotamia around 2500 BC. It even referred to the use of the plant belladonna for curing excessive salivary flow.

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