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Saliva: Secretion and Functions

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Preface

We are glad to present this monograph on saliva. It provides a comprehensive overview of the latest developments in salivary research by some of the world’s leading experts in the field. One of the most fascinating features of saliva and the oral cavity is that almost all aspects of life science research are applied to the oral cavity. However, the importance of saliva goes further than new technical developments in science. Health professionals are more and more aware of the importance of saliva for oral health and well-being. As saliva secretion is steadily compromised with advancing age, this becomes a factor of concern in societies with an aging population, especially with a growing number of people who keep their own teeth. In addition, the numerous functions of saliva, like antimicrobial activity, lubrication, wound healing and its role in taste experience, are only truly recognized when saliva secretion is hampered. Moreover, as a new line of research, salivary glands might even be regenerated with modern techniques like stem cell therapy.

In medical diagnostics, saliva shows its value as a safe and economical alternative to blood. Road side tests for alcohol and drugs as well as various home tests are already applied on a large scale in various countries. Also more advanced diagnostics, like the diagnosis of tumors, is possible by using saliva, because RNA and DNA are well preserved in saliva.

In the last sections of this monograph, salivary-related disorders are discussed. These may have to do with too much saliva, which results in drooling, or too little saliva, which may result in xerostomia. Also, complaints like infections of the salivary glands, sialoliths and mucoceles are discussed.

This publication is not only recommended to basic scientists working in the field of oral biology, but also to dental students, dentists and health professionals who want to know more about one of the most underestimated bodily fluids.

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