



MOUTH ULCERS

also known as aphthous ulcers

Mouth ulcers are small sores which usually appear on the inside of the lips or cheeks. They can also be found underneath or on the edge of the tongue. Mouth ulcers form quickly and can be very painful. They tend to heal in about a week. In some people mouth ulcers may come back again, usually 4 -12 weeks later. There are effective ways to treat mouth ulcers. Avoiding possible causes will help.

CAUSES

Mouth ulcers can be caused by:

- biting or chewing the inside of your cheek
- damage to the inside of your mouth from very hot or acidic food, or hot drinks
- brushing your teeth and gums too hard
- poorly fitting dentures
- certain medicines - ask your pharmacist
- some cancer treatments
- diseases which affect the immune system
- a dry mouth due to some medicines or health conditions.

WHO'S AT RISK

- Anyone can get mouth ulcers but they are more common in young adults, students and people under a lot of pressure.
- Lack of iron, folic acid, most B-group vitamins or being stressed or run down may make some people more likely to get mouth ulcers.
- Some women may get mouth ulcers just before their period.
- You may get mouth ulcers if other people in your family also get them.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- round or oval shaped ulcers in the mouth, usually less than 1cm wide
- ulcers are yellow to grey in colour with a raised red rim
- ulcers can be very painful and there may be redness and swelling around them
- some people feel tingling or burning on the inside of the lips or cheeks, 1-2 days before the ulcer appears
- ulcers usually heal in 7-14 days without scarring.

Blisters or sores on the lips and around the mouth are usually cold sores, not mouth ulcers. Check with your pharmacist if you're unsure and read the *Cold Sores* Fact Card.

IMPORTANT

See your doctor or dentist if you have mouth ulcers that:

- last for three weeks or more or have not healed with treatment
- are large e.g. greater than 1cm across
- bleed
- heal with scarring
- occur often e.g. every 1-2 weeks
- occur with a sore throat
- are painless
- occur as well as a rash on your face or body, or with diarrhoea.

TREATMENT

Although most mouth ulcers will heal by themselves, your pharmacist can advise you on products that reduce pain and make the ulcers heal faster.

Pastes

- form a protective layer over the mouth ulcer, giving it a chance to heal
- relieve the pain, redness and swelling
- some pastes contain anti-inflammatory cortisone medicines which can help mouth ulcers heal faster and stop more ulcers forming if used early enough - ask your pharmacist.

Mouthwashes

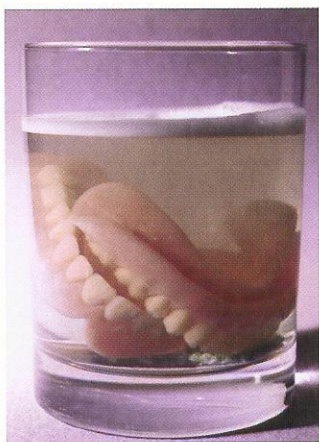
- stop bacteria in the mouth from infecting the ulcer and may also reduce the redness and swelling in the mouth
- work best if used as soon as you feel a mouth ulcer coming on or as ulcers just start to form
- are helpful for treating mouth ulcers that are hard to get at
- help to keep your mouth clean if it is painful to brush your teeth.

Gels

- relieve the pain, redness and swelling
- may contain medicines which numb the ulcer.

Paints

- relieve the pain.



Your **Self Care** Pharmacist



KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN
DAVID S. NOLTE PHARMACY
David S. Nolte, B.Pharm., M.P.S.
701-703 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH CARLTON
Telephone 9349 1522 - Fax 9349 1115

SELF CARE

- Rinse your mouth with a chlorhexidine or other suitable mouthwash - ask your pharmacist.
- Sucking on ice may help to reduce the pain of mouth ulcers.
- Avoid spicy foods when you have a mouth ulcer.
- Avoid things which cause your ulcers e.g. very hot foods or drinks.
- If you wear dentures, have them checked regularly to make sure they fit well.
- If your mouth ulcers are very painful, use a pain reliever before eating.
- Drink 6-8 glasses of water a day. Check with your doctor first if you have kidney or heart problems.
- Eat healthy food.

Learn to relax and develop ways to cope with stress.

Other relevant Fact Cards

- *Vitamins*
- *Pain Relievers*
- *Relaxation Techniques*
- *Cold Sores*

Contact:

Your doctor - listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book

Your dentist - listed under Dentists in the yellow pages of the phone book

Your Self Care pharmacist. To find:

ACT	(02) 6283 4777
NSW	(02) 9437 5941
TAS	(03) 6231 2636
VIC	(03) 9903 9600
QLD	(07) 3844 4900
WA	(08) 9388 2886
SA	(08) 8272 1211

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

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