

Short Communication

2 Steps to Deal with Mouth Ulcers

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Want to munch in your food item but cannot? Not just eating, mouth ulcers also make talking difficult. They are not contagious and usually heal within a couple of weeks or so. But mouth ulcers can be annoying especially when it comes to their tendency of recurring.

Features of aphthous ulcer/canker sore:-

- Minor aphthous ulcer is the most common type of ulcer people face
- White or yellow oval-shaped spots with red borders inside your mouth
- Sores are shallow, painful, tender and surrounding skin is swollen
- Ulcers heal and reoccur at different sites.
- 2-4 mm in diameter & 1-6 in number
- Heal with no permanent scarring in 7-10 days
- Recur at an interval of 1-4 months
- Major aphthous ulcers are less common. They are larger in diameter (>1cm) and take more time to heal i.e. 10-40 days and may leave scarring.

Here is how you can deal with mouth ulcers:-

STEP-1: IDENTIFY THE CAUSE

Identifying the cause is very important as the majority of the cases are seen to recover by the removal of the cause. The treatment protocol followed is also based on the cause.

There can be various reasons behind mouth ulcers, what is yours?

The majority of cases are associated with Aphthous stomatitis (aphthous ulcer) or local trauma.

1. Probable causes of Aphthous ulcers:-

- From vitamin B12 deficiency, iron deficiency
- From stress
- From the cessation of smoking
- Due to menstruation
- From Trauma
- From Food allergies or hypersensitivity to sodium lauryl sulfate (found in many brands of toothpaste)

2. Types of mechanical trauma causing ulcers:-

- Ulcers by Dentures

Mouth ulcers may appear when new dentures are fitted, or when old dentures no longer fit properly. With age, the jawbone gets resorbed and your dentures can become loose.

- Ulcers by Braces, tongue biting, cheek biting, or through rough foods.
- Having a sharp tooth

If an ulcer is formed due to any nearby sharp surface then even after healing it keeps on recurring on the same site

3. Chemical injury:-

- Caustic chemicals may cause ulceration
- A common example is holding an aspirin tablet next to a painful tooth in an attempt to relieve toothache

4. Thermal injury:-

- Burns by hot food or beverages

5. Ulcers due to Irradiation:-

- Radiation-induced ulcers due to radiotherapy
- When salivary glands are irradiated it can cause dry mouth (xerostomia) making the mouth more vulnerable to ulcers.

STEP-2: TREATMENT

Having identified the cause treatment becomes easier:-

1. Medications:-

- **Vitamin B12 medications** can be taken for a week or so depending on symptoms, along with mouth ulcer gel and mouthwash.
- Any **Chlorhexidine gel** is very effective for recurring aphthous ulcers. Local application using a clean finger or cotton bud 4-5 times a day is advisable.
- Any **choline salicylate gel** with lignocaine combination can also be used but over-application should be avoided.
- **Chlorhexidine mouthwash** is also useful. But regular or long term usage can cause staining of teeth.

- For intolerable pain, local anesthetics like lidocaine 5% ointment can be used.

2. Home precautions to be taken:-

- Till the ulcers don't heal don't eat any spicy or sour food.
- Stay hydrated with a good intake of fluids.
- Rinse your mouth with lukewarm saltwater. Keep the water in the mouth for 10-15 seconds and repeat it every few hours, it helps to keep the ulcer dry.
- Keep your mouth clean. Brush twice daily.

3. Remedies for ulcers due to mechanical trauma:-

Dentures:- You might be required to adjust the fit of your dentures. Otherwise, you can also use a mouth ulcer gel for recovery.

Remember- Choline salicylate gel should not be used under the denture.

Braces:- Orthodontic wax can be applied to the braces.

Sharp tooth:- Visit your dentist to slightly trim or round off the sharp surface.

Tongue biting or cheek biting or by eating rough foods:- In such cases, the ulcer will start healing in 10 days if not it signifies there is another underlying pathology. Simple mouth ulcer gel can also be taken along with it.

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