

Canker Sores

Definition

- Painful, shallow ulcers (sores) on the inner lips or cheeks
- Not caused by an infection

Health Information

Symptoms

- Small ulcers have a white center with a red border around them
- Size is usually less than ¼ inch (6 mm)
- Found on the inner lips and inner cheeks
- The sores are very painful, even when not eating
- Usually get 1 canker sore at a time. Sometimes get 2 or 3.
- No fever or other symptoms

Causes

- Canker sores have many causes. Often, the cause is unknown.
- Minor injuries to the mouth can trigger a canker sore.
- Examples are from a rough food or a hard toothbrush. Biting oneself while chewing can start one.
- Food allergies or irritants may also be a trigger.
- More common during menstrual periods
- Vitamin deficiencies can also be a cause. A vitamin deficiency can occur if your child is a picky eater.
- Canker sores can run in families (genetic).
- Not caused by the Herpes virus or other infections

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Canker sores are the most common cause of unexplained mouth ulcers.
- They happen in healthy children.
- They are harmless and go away on their own.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Liquid Antacid for Mouth Pain:

- For mouth pain, use a liquid antacid such as Mylanta or the store brand. Give 4 times per day as needed. After meals often is a good time. Age: Can use for children over 1 year old.
- For children over age 6, can use 1 teaspoon (5 ml) as a mouth wash. Keep it on the ulcers as long as possible. Then can spit it out or swallow it.
- For younger children age 1 to 6, put a few drops in the mouth. Can also put it on with a cotton swab.
- Can use honey instead until you can buy a liquid antacid. Follow the same directions as given for antacids. Avoid honey if less than 1 year old.
- Caution: Do not use regular mouth washes, because they sting.

3. Pain Medicine:

- To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.

4. **Fluids and Soft Diet:**

- Try to get your child to drink adequate fluids.
- Goal: keep your child well hydrated.
- Cold drinks, milk shakes, popsicles, slushes, and sherbet are good choices.
- **Solids.** Offer a soft diet. Also avoid foods that need much chewing. Avoid citrus, salty, or spicy foods. Note: Fluid intake is more important than eating any solids.

5. **Vitamins:**

- If your child is a picky eater, start your child on a multi-vitamin. Give daily.

6. **Prevention of Recurrent Canker Sores:**

- Avoid minor injuries to the inside of the mouth.
- Avoid any foods that you think are a cause.
- Fix any dental problems that are present.

7. **What to Expect:**

- Canker sores heal up in 1 to 2 weeks on their own.
- Once they start, no treatment can shorten the illness.
- Treatment can help with the pain.
- Some children get recurrent canker sores.

8. **Return to School:**

- Children with canker sores do not need to miss any school.
- Canker sores cannot be spread to others.

Call Your Doctor If

- Mouth ulcers last more than 2 weeks
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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