

Canker Sores: What Are They and What Can You Do About Them?

<http://familydoctor.org/handouts/613.html>

What are canker sores?

Canker sores are shallow, painful sores in your mouth. They are usually red or may sometimes have a white coating over them. You might get them on the inside of your lips, the insides of your cheeks or under your tongue. Canker sores are different from fever blisters, which usually are on the outside of your lips or the corners of your mouth.

Anyone can get canker sores, but people in their teens and 20s get them more often. Canker sores may run in families, but they aren't contagious. Doctors don't know what causes canker sores, but stress may be a factor.

What should I do when I get canker sores?

If you have small canker sores you can treat them at home. You can try taking ibuprofen (brand name: Advil) or acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol) for pain. Other medicines, such as Anbesol, Oragel, Orabase and Zilactin-B, might keep your canker sores from becoming irritated by eating, drinking or brushing your teeth. You put these medicines right on the sore.

You can also mix equal amounts of Milk of Magnesia and Benadryl Allergy liquid. After it's mixed, you can swish a teaspoonful in your mouth for about 1 minute and then spit it out. If you do this every 4 to 6 hours, your canker sores may hurt less.

Some people think that sucking on zinc lozenges, taking vitamin C or vitamin B complex, using a sage-and-chamomile mouthwash or taking a lysine supplement helps their canker sores heal faster.

When should I call my family doctor about canker sores?

If your canker sores are large, last longer than a week or are so sore that you can't eat, you should make an appointment to see your doctor. You should make an appointment with your doctor, too, if you also have a fever or feel sick when you have canker sores.

What can my doctor do to help my canker sores?

Several prescription medicines may help with canker sores. Your doctor may prescribe an anti-inflammatory (Aphthasol or Kenalog in Orabase) or collagenase inhibitor (Tetracycline or Peridex) if problems persist. You can talk about them with your doctor to decide what is best for you.

What's the right way to use the medicine for my canker sores?

You may be asked to "swish and swallow" or "swish and spit" the medicine. This means that you swish the medicine around in your mouth, especially around your canker sore, for a few minutes before swallowing or spitting it out.

If your doctor has you use a medicine to put on the canker sore, you should dry the sore with a tissue. Next, put a small amount of medicine on a cotton swab (like a Q-Tip). Then, put the medicine on your canker sore using the cotton swab. Don't eat or drink for

30 minutes. If you do, the medicine will be washed away. Be sure to use the medicine for as many days as your doctor tells you to.

What can I do to prevent canker sores?

Unfortunately, doctor's don't know of anything that prevents canker sores from forming. If you get canker sores often, or if they're very painful, talk to your family doctor.

(Created 10/00)

(Updated 10/02)

Alternative Medicine approaches to Aphthous ulcers include;

QUICK REVIEW

- Recurrent canker sores can be caused by trauma, food sensitivities (especially milk and gluten sensitivities), stress, and/or nutrient deficiency.
- Eliminating food allergens, sources of gluten, and nutritional deficiencies results in complete cure in most cases.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

The data presented suggest that numerous factors can lead to recurrent canker sores. Considerable evidence suggests that the underlying problem may be a gluten sensitivity and/or food allergy. In addition, nutrient deficiencies need to be corrected. DGL can be used to help heal the ulcers.

Diet

The diet should be free of known allergens and all gluten sources (i.e., grains).

Nutritional Supplements

- Vitamin C: 1,000 mg per day
- High-potency multiple-vitamin-and mineral supplement.
- DGL: One to two 380-mg chewable tablets twenty minutes before meals.