



Mouth Ulcers

Patient information leaflet



Common Ailments Service

Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your or your child's condition.

Mouth ulcers are painful sores inside the mouth that often occur in people who are otherwise healthy. They are common and should heal by themselves in less than 2 weeks without leaving a scar.

You may have more than 1 ulcer at a time. They are usually pale yellow with a red area around them, round or oval, and less than 1cm across.



Mouth ulcers can be caused by:

- damage to the inside of your mouth, such as biting the inside of your cheek or badly-fitting dentures
- stress and anxiety
- your genes – mouth ulcers run in some families
- some medicines – ask your pharmacist whether your medicine(s) can cause ulcers
- a lack of iron, vitamin B12 or folic acid
- changes in hormone levels, such as during pregnancy
- stopping smoking – people may develop ulcers when they first stop smoking
- eating certain foods, such as chocolate, coffee, peanuts and gluten-containing foods

You are more likely to get mouth ulcers if you have:

- a weakened immune system from having a condition like HIV or lupus
- Crohn's disease or coeliac disease
- Behçet's syndrome
- viral infections such as chickenpox and hand, foot and mouth disease



Treatment and Prevention

It is not possible to stop mouth ulcers coming back. Most ulcers are mild and cause only a small amount of pain, so you may not need any treatment.

To reduce the discomfort you could:

- use a soft toothbrush to brush your teeth
- eat foods that are easy to chew, and avoid hard foods such as toast or crisps
- avoid spicy or very salty foods and acidic drinks
- drink cool drinks through a straw

Some people find that salt (saline) mouthwashes help soothe ulcer pain. Dissolve half a teaspoon of salt in a glassful of warm water, swish this around your mouth and spit it out. Do this as often as you need to.

Do not swallow the salt mouthwash.



Treatment and Prevention

Medicines that can help

These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you or your child.

Anaesthetic gels may help to ease the pain of mouth ulcers. You can buy them from your local pharmacy.

Chlorhexidine 0.2% mouthwash may prevent infection, reduce the pain and help your mouth ulcer to heal more quickly.

Benzydamine 0.15% oromucosal spray may help with the pain but the effect does not last very long so you may need to use it several times a day.

If your mouth ulcer makes eating or drinking uncomfortable, your pharmacist may recommend **hydrocortisone 2.5mg buccal tablets** to reduce the pain and help the ulcers to heal more quickly. See your doctor if the ulcer has not healed within 5 days.

Self-care at home

You may be less likely to get mouth ulcers again if you:

- avoid foods that you think trigger your mouth ulcers
- take part in activities you find relaxing – some people find yoga, meditation or exercise help with stress and anxiety

Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).



When to Get Help

Contact your GP if:

- your mouth ulcer is bigger than 1cm across, or is in a group of 5 or more ulcers
- you get mouth ulcers more than twice a year
- your ulcer is stopping you eating or drinking
- your mouth ulcer does not hurt at all
- your mouth ulcer is becoming more painful, red or is bleeding
- you have a high temperature or feel unwell
- you have a weakened immune system, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy
- you have ulcers on your gums or the roof of your mouth, or ulcers outside your mouth

Urgently contact your GP or dentist if:

- you have had a mouth ulcer for more than 3 weeks - mouth ulcers may be an early sign that you have another illness, including mouth cancer

If you are worried that your or your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.



More information

For more information on mouth ulcers or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/m/article/mouthulcer/>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/oral-dental-care/mouth-ulcers-leaflet>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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