

## Mouth Ulcers

You have been given this leaflet because you have asked for mouth ulcer treatment that you can get “over the counter” (OTC) from pharmacies, supermarkets and some other shops. After a local and national public consultation on OTC medicines, we do not prescribe simple mouth ulcer treatment anymore. Mouth ulcers are common and should clear up on their own within a week or two.

Mouth ulcers aren't contagious and shouldn't be confused with cold sores. If you have several mouth ulcers, this can be a symptom of:

- hand, foot and mouth disease, which also causes a rash on the hands and feet
- oral lichen planus, which causes a white, lacy pattern inside the cheeks

## Managing your condition

Mouth ulcers need time to heal and there is no quick fix. Avoiding things that irritate your mouth ulcer should help speed over the healing process, reduce pain and reduce the chance of recurrence.

### Do

- use a soft-bristled toothbrush
- drink cool drinks through a straw
- eat softer foods
- get regular dental check-ups
- eat a healthy, balanced diet

### Don't

- eat very spicy, salty or acidic food
- eat rough, crunchy food, e.g toast
- drink hot or acidic drinks, e.g fruit juice
- use chewing gum
- use toothpaste containing sodium lauryl sulphate

## How can I avoid triggers/ suggested lifestyle changes

You can't always prevent mouth ulcers. Most are caused by things you can try to avoid such as:

- biting the inside of your cheek
- badly fitting dentures, braces, rough fillings or a sharp tooth
- cuts or burns while eating or drinking – for example, hard food or hot drinks
- a food intolerance or allergy
- damaging your gums with a toothbrush or irritating toothpaste
- feeling tired, stressed or anxious

Sometime they're triggered by things you can't always control, for example:

- hormonal changes – such as during pregnancy
- your genes – some families get mouth ulcers more often
- a long-term condition – such as inflammatory bowel disease, coeliac disease or Behçet's
- a vitamin B12 or iron deficiency
- medications – including some NSAIDs, beta-blockers or nicorandil
- stopping smoking – people may develop mouth ulcers when they first stop smoking

## How do I treat?

Speak to your pharmacist who can recommend a treatment available without a prescription, to speed up healing, prevent infection or reduce pain, but they may not always work, for example:

- Antimicrobial mouthwash (e.g containing chlorhexidine or hexetidine)
- Painkilling mouthwash, gel or spray (e.g containing benzydamine, pharmacy only)
- Corticosteroid lozenges (e.g containing hydrocortisone, pharmacy only)

## When should I seek advice?

See a dentist or GP if your mouth ulcer:

- lasts longer than 3 weeks or keeps coming back
- becomes more painful and red – this may be a sign of an infection

Although most mouth ulcers are harmless it is best to get long lasting mouth ulcers checked.

## For more information

- Visit your local pharmacy for advice

Find out more about self-care at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Be self-care aware