

## MOUTH LESIONS: ULCERS

Mouth ulcers are raw spots on your gums or the lining of your mouth formed mostly in response to some form of irritant. An ulcer is often whitish in the middle with an edge of redder tissue around it. Depending on their cause, mouth ulcers may be quite painful but usually resolve within 7-10 days.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. *What causes ulcers in my mouth?*

- Ulcers in your mouth may be due to the following:
- Hot or spicy food
- Repeated rubbing from an ill fitting denture
- Stress (canker sores or “aphthous ulcers”)
- A viral infection
- Erosive Lichen Planus (an autoimmune disorder)
- Cancer

#### 2. *Who is at risk for mouth ulcers?*

- Most mouth ulcers are caused by trauma (pizza burns) or stress (canker sores). People with weakened immune systems may be more susceptible to both canker sores and certain viral infections which show up as patches of small ulcers in the mouth. Trauma from ill fitting dentures may also cause ulcers. Much more rarely, mouth ulcers may be caused by cancer.

#### 3. *What is my role in managing an ulcer in my mouth?*

- Note the size, location and duration of the ulcer. Determine if it is painful and recall if you traumatized the area. If an ulcer persists beyond one week have the area examined by your dentist.

#### 4. *What can happen if I do nothing about the ulcer in my mouth?*

- If the ulcer is the result of a disease process it may worsen if left untreated. If it is caused by ongoing trauma it will also worsen with time. In the rare event that it is cancer, it can lead to disfigurement or death if not diagnosed and treated in a timely manner.



Common Mouth Ulcer



Red Ulcer  
(Erosive Lichen Planus)



Oral Cancer