



## Canker Sores (Aphthous Ulcers)

Canker sores are ulcerations found inside the mouth. They are usually small with a white, yellow, or grey center and a red border. Small canker sores are classified as minor aphthous ulcers. Occasionally the ulcers can be large, and are called major aphthous ulcers. There may be one or multiple ulcers and they can reoccur periodically. The sores are not contagious.

Presently there is no known cause or cure of these ulcers. They are thought to be caused by an immune system reaction. Many factors can trigger a reaction, such as viruses, bacterial infections, food sensitivities/ allergy, nutritional deficiencies, mechanical trauma, medications, stress, and hormonal change. Aphthous ulcers may be hereditary. Rarely aphthous ulcers are associated with systematic diseases.

Sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS) is an ingredient in toothpaste that may trigger ulcer formation. It is added as a foaming agent. People who are sensitive to SLS may find using SLS-Free toothpaste to be beneficial.

Brands of toothpastes that do not contain SLS (sodium lauryl sulfate) include:

- Tom's of Maine: Clean and Gentle Toothpaste
- Sensodyne ProEnamel

There is no known cure for these ulcers. Palliative treatment is recommended, which includes soft, cool foods and avoidance of hot and spicy foods. The use of an oral rinse such as Peroxyl may prove helpful. The ulcers typically resolve in 2-3 weeks. Over the counter products such as Orabase, Orajel, Zylactin, or "canker cover sore patch" may help to relieve discomfort (do not use these products on children under 2 years old). You should consult with your dentist for any prolonged symptoms or if your child is not maintaining adequate nutrition and hydration due to sores.

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