



SADA

THE SOUTH AFRICAN
DENTAL ASSOCIATION

*Patient Education
Information
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**Common
Oral Sores
and
Infections**

Common Oral Sores and Infections

Few things are as painful as sores or infections in or around your mouth. Mouth sores can be caused by trauma, like biting the inside of your cheeks or tongue. Most often, these heal on their own in about a week.

Poorly fitting dentures also can rub and cause sores. If you develop sores from your dentures, see your dentist. He or she can make sure they are fitting properly. Do not try to adjust the fit of your dentures yourself.

Other common sores and infections include canker sores, cold sores, and oral yeast infections, like thrush.

Canker Sores

Canker sores occur inside the mouth, usually on the cheek lining, tongue, or gums. Most often, these sores are round and small (about the size of a pencil eraser), but they can be larger.

Canker sores are yellowish in the middle with a red edge around them.

- Some things that may contribute to canker sores include:
- biting the inside of the cheeks or tongue;
- constant dry mouth;
- family history of canker sores;
- low levels of some minerals or vitamins in the diet, such as iron, folate, and B vitamins;
- emotional stress.

These sores usually heal within 1 to 2 weeks. If they do not or if they develop often, talk to your SADA dentist. He or she may prescribe a medicine to apply to the sore or a mouth rinse that might speed up healing and reduce pain.

Cold Sores

Cold sores often appear on the lips. These sores come back repeatedly, often with months passing between episodes.

Before they develop, you may feel a tingling, numbness, or burning sensation around the spot where sores are about to erupt. After about 6 hours, blisters appear, which last a few days before they burst and a crusty scab form.

Cold sores can be spread easily from one person to another, especially between the time that the blisters burst and the scab forms. These sores are caused by a Herpes virus.

Although it is typically caught in childhood, the sores usually do not show up until adulthood, when something triggers an attack.

Common triggers are:

- fever;
- exposure to the sun;
- extreme tiredness;
- hormonal changes, like pregnancy or having your period.

Cold sores usually heal between 1 and 10 days after the blisters form. Talk to your dentist or physician if you are developing cold sores. He or she may prescribe a pill or cream that might help the sores heal more quickly and may even extend the time between outbreaks.

Oral Yeast Infections

Two common types of oral yeast infections are thrush and denture stomatitis.

Thrush is a white coating that develops on the inside of your cheeks, top surface of the tongue, or the roof of the mouth. This type of infection is

different from other yeast infections in that the coating can be scraped off.

Thrush is typically associated with the use of steroid inhalers for breathing problems, like asthma. Rinsing the mouth with water after using the inhaler might reduce the risk of developing thrush.

Denture stomatitis is, as it sounds, an infection that is triggered mainly by dentures, although it can develop in anyone who wears an oral appliance, like a retainer or bridge. This infection shows up as red patches, usually on the roof of the mouth.

Some causes include:

- poor oral hygiene (especially if not cleaning the denture or appliance as directed);
- wearing the appliance too long (for example, dentures should be removed before sleeping);
- poorly fitting dentures or oral appliances.

Tell your dentist if you notice signs of thrush or denture stomatitis. He or she may prescribe a medicine to help clear up the infection.

Canker sores, cold sores, and yeast infections can be painful, unsightly, and interfere with proper dental hygiene or nutrition.

Your SADA dentist may be able to help relieve this pain or speed up healing.

Talk to him or her if you think you may be developing one of these sores or infections.