

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Mouth Ulcers

Common mouth ulcers (Recurrent Aphthous Ulceration-RAU)

Many people have mouth ulcers from time to time. Whilst these are a nuisance, most need no tests or treatment. RAU is the most common diagnosis for mouth ulcers. The ulcers can be as small as a pinhead or as large as your small fingernail. As the name suggests, they come and go (recurrent).

The ulcers can appear on your lip, tongue, cheek, gum, roof of the mouth, soft palate. You can have single ulcers or multiple ulcers.



However, if these ulcers are too painful and difficult to live with, your dentist or doctor may refer you for a second opinion and treatment. Sometimes an ulcer or ulcers are the first sign of an underlying illness.

This will need further investigating. Once this illness is treated the ulcers may be more bearable or go away completely. Any ulcer that fails to heal after a reasonable time (2-3 weeks), that hasn't been diagnosed by a doctor or dentist, could be serious. It maybe a sign of something like mouth cancer. If you are worried tell your doctor or dentist.

What happens then?

An appointment will be made for you to see a specialist. This is normally at a local hospital. They will ask lots of questions trying to work out the cause of your ulcers. They may ask important personal questions. These will be about your diet, going to the toilet or even about your periods.

At the visit you may have a blood test. Sometimes, a small skin sample will need be taken from inside your mouth (a biopsy). This may happen at your first appointment or at another time.

The biopsy is done with you awake and normally under local anaesthetic (a numbing injection) to make the procedure comfortable for you. It doesn't take long. You may have some stiches at the end of the procedure that will dissolve in up to 14 days.

After the biopsy

The results of the blood tests and biopsy will take a few days to be ready. Therefore, you will need another appointment. Your specialist will discuss the findings with you then.

Possible treatments

Treatments will vary. These depend on the cause of your mouth ulcers. These could be different mouthwashes or pastes to place over the sore areas. You may need a prescription medicine.

Some of the mouthwashes may include steroids. These will also need to be prescribed. Others try to numb your mouth to help with the soreness.

For some people there won't be a "cure". The treatments will try to make you more comfortable.

Follow Up

Sometimes to best help you, you will need follow-up appointments.

Your specialist will tell you how often these should be. The time of our next appointment maybe in a few weeks or months. The better the treatment is working, the longer the time between visits.