



Canker Sores **(Aphthous Ulcers)**

Canker sores are ulcerations found inside the mouth. They are usually small with a white, yellow, or gray 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. Canker sores are not the same as “cold sores”. Cold sores are caused by herpes simplex virus and present differently than canker sores.

There are many different causes of canker sores. The sores are thought to be an immune system reaction. Many factors can trigger a reaction, such as the body fighting a systemic virus, bacterial infections, food sensitivities/allergies, nutritional deficiencies, mechanical trauma, medications, stress, and hormonal changes. Aphthous ulcers may be hereditary. Rarely, aphthous ulcers are associated with systemic diseases, the most common being gastrointestinal diseases like Celiac and Crohn’s.

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.

There is no known cure for these ulcers. Palliative treatment is recommended, which includes soft, cool foods and avoidance of acidic and spicy foods (ex: oranges, lemons, pineapple, tomatoes). The use of an oral rinse such as Peroxyl (over the counter) or Peridex (prescription) may help. The ulcers typically resolve in 2-3 weeks. Over the counter products such as Orabase, Orajel, Zylactin (“canker cover sore patch”) may help to relieve discomfort – however, do not use these products on children under 2 years old. Please consult your dentist to distinguish the type of sore and best treatment. You should also consult with your dentist for any prolonged symptoms or if your child is not maintaining adequate nutrition and hydration due to sores.

SLS FREE TOOTHPASTES

KIDS:

- Hello Kids Fluoride Toothpaste
- Burt’s Bees Kids Fruit Fusion Toothpaste with Fluoride
- Squigle Enamel Saver Toothpaste

ADOLESCENT / ADULT:

- Biotene Fluoride Toothpaste
- CloSYS Sensitive Fluoride Toothpaste
- Sensodyne Toothpaste (most Sensodyne products are SLS free - check label)



What is SLS?

Sodium Lauryl Sulfate is used as a detergent in many cleaning and hygiene products. It is found in laundry detergent, toothpastes, shampoos, and shaving cream. SLS is added to these products for its ability to create foam and lather. SLS is not necessary for adequate cleaning of the teeth.

Is SLS bad for me?

No. There have been no studies showing that SLS is not safe for use. However, it can irritate the skin with prolonged and constant exposure, and it may worsen skin problems in people with chronic skin hypersensitivity.

Why is SLS in my toothpaste?

People like toothpaste that foams and lathers. Toothpaste companies discovered years ago that when they removed SLS from their toothpaste, consumers did not like the non-foaming action, and it felt like the toothpaste wasn't working. They put SLS back in the toothpaste to please consumers so people would keep buying their toothpaste.

Does SLS in toothpaste cause canker sores?

SLS in toothpaste does not cause problems in the vast majority of people. However, there have been several studies about the effect of toothpaste SLS on canker sores (aphthous ulcers). If you are prone to getting canker sores, you should consider SLS-free toothpaste. Use the SLS-free toothpaste for at least two months to see if it decreases the number of canker sores you get.