

Canker Sores

Canker sores are open sores on the inner linings of the mouth and cheek. Although the cause of these sores is largely still a mystery, in some cases it may relate to injury to the inside of the mouth, infection, heredity, female hormones, or stress. The sores usually heal without treatment in 7 to 10 days.

To reduce your chances of developing canker sores, try to avoid injuring the inside of your mouth. Remember to chew food slowly, use a soft-bristle toothbrush, and brush your teeth gently. You should also avoid any foods that you think might cause canker sores.

When you have a canker sore, try to avoid coffee, spicy and salty food, and citrus fruits, such as oranges and grapefruits. You should also avoid abrasive foods, such as bread crusts, corn chips, or potato chips.

You may consider covering the canker sore with an oral paste, such as Orabase, Gly-oxide, Amosan, or Cankaid. In addition, Ambesol—which is sometimes used for babies for teething discomfort—also may help relieve pain. Finally, you might find relief either by rinsing your mouth with a mixture of one tablespoon of hydrogen peroxide in eight ounces of water, or by applying a thin paste of baking soda and water to the sore.

You should call your health care professional if any canker sore doesn't heal after 14 days, or if a sore is particularly painful and comes back frequently. You should also call if sores develop after you start taking a new medication or if you have white spots in your mouth that aren't canker sores and don't improve in a week or two.

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For more health information ...

- Connect to our Web site at **members.kp.org**. Here you'll find the Health Encyclopedia, which offers more in-depth information on this and many other topics, including “Mouth Problems, Non-injury.”
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Visit your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.

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