



APHTHOUS ULCER

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Aphthous ulcers, commonly known as **canker sores**, are superficial lesions of the oral mucosa that are most prevalent during the first few decades of life. These painful ulcers are typically recurrent in nature and tend to be associated with a positive family history in one third of cases. Such a condition is called recurrent aphthous stomatitis (RAS). This non-life threatening condition is seen in up to 40-50% of the population in the U.S. The cause of aphthous ulcers is unknown. However, they are thought to be aggravated by stress or an underlying illness.

Aphthous ulcers appear as small, oval-shaped lesions with a yellow base surrounded by an erythematous halo. They are most often found on the inner surface of the lips, inner cheeks, or floor of the mouth. They can occur individually or in groups, and most often disappear within two weeks.

Diagnosis of aphthous ulcers is based entirely off of the individual's history and physical examination. No special testing is available.

Treatment for aphthous ulcers is often unnecessary, as most lesions eventually heal spontaneously. However, **topical steroids**, such as hydrocortisone or triamcinolone, have been proven to be effective in reducing pain and the duration of the ulcers. No treatment is currently available that will reduce the frequency of recurrence.

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