



GEOGRAPHIC TONGUE

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The surface of the tongue is normally covered by small bumps called papillae. Geographic tongue occurs when parts of the tongue are missing the papillae for unknown reasons. Geographic tongue is a common, benign condition that affects 1-3% of the general population and is seen in both males and females. Although this condition is most commonly found by itself, sometimes it can be associated with other diseases such as psoriasis, fissured tongue and eczema.

Patients with a geographic tongue usually do not have any symptoms, although some patients may complain of having a burning or painful sensation after eating spicy foods. Alcohol, tobacco and some types of toothpaste can aggravate the symptoms of geographic tongue. Because of the asymptomatic nature of this condition, many patients are usually unaware of the lesions and the condition is usually found during a routine oral examination. The tongue may have a map-like appearance that is smooth with beefy red lesions that may change in location from day to day.

There is no treatment for geographic tongue as it is a benign condition. For symptomatic patients with burning, sensitivity, pain, or tenderness; a potent topical corticosteroid gel as well as avoidance of alcohol and tobacco has been found to be helpful. Changing to toothpaste made for sensitive teeth has also shown to be helpful in decreasing symptoms in some patients.

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