

# WHY DO CHILDREN GET MOUTH SORES?

There are a variety of reasons a child may get mouth sores. Trauma and stress may cause aphthous ulcers, or “canker sores.” The herpes virus may cause cold sores and infected teeth may cause abscesses.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **1. How do I tell what type of Mouth Sore my child has?**

Canker sores usually have cream colored centers with red edges. They can vary from pencil tip size to the size of a quarter. Canker sores are usually located on the “loose” tissues inside the mouth, like the linings of the cheeks and lips, the under surface and edges of the tongue, and on the floor of the mouth.

Cold sores start as blisters, which usually break quickly, leaving a red spot with a yellowish edge. These can vary from pencil tip size to about half an inch. They are usually located on the “fixed” tissues inside the mouth, like the roof of the mouth or the gums adjacent to the teeth. They can also appear on and around the lips.

Abscesses appear next to or below infected teeth. There is often a lump or swelling involved. The color can vary from normal tissue color to red or yellow. They will sometimes leak pus. The size can vary from about the size of a pencil eraser to swellings that can distort the appearance of the face.

### **2. How do I treat these Mouth Sores?**

Canker, traumatic and herpetic sores usually resolve in 1-2 weeks without treatment. If they are large or very painful, a dentist can prescribe medications to manage the symptoms. Abscesses should be treated by a dentist as soon as possible.

### **3. Are there other types of Mouth Sores in children?**

There are other conditions that can cause sores in your child's mouth. If an unknown mouth sore arises in your child's mouth, consult your dentist.

### **4. How can I prevent Mouth Sores in my child?**

It is difficult to prevent canker and cold sores. Proper nutrition and rest will help keep the immune system strong and limit their frequency and severity. Abscesses are prevented by keeping the teeth and gums healthy through proper oral hygiene and regular dental visits. Traumatic injuries can be reduced by wearing proper protective equipment such as mouthguards and helmets.