

Glossary of Key Terms

ANGULAR STOMATITIS

Inflammation of the angles (corners) of the lips. See also Stomatitis.

ANTIMICROBIALS

An agent that kills microorganisms or inhibits their growth. For example, antibacterials are used against bacteria and antifungals are used against fungi.

CANDIDA (OR ORAL CANDIDOSIS)

See Oral Thrush.

DENTAL CARIES

Also known as tooth decay or a cavity, is an infection, bacterial in origin that causes destruction of the hard tissues of the teeth.

DESENSITISING AGENTS

Substances such as strontium and potassium chloride, often used in toothpastes, to reduce the sensitivity of teeth to temperature changes, sweet foods and to touch.

FLEXION CONTRACTURES

Stiffness or constriction in muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, or skin that restricts normal movement.

FLUORIDE

A naturally occurring mineral found in water in varying amounts, depending on where you live. Also found in certain foods, including tea and fish. Fluoride's main benefit is in helping reduce the risk of tooth decay, which is why it's added to many brands of toothpaste and, in some areas, to the water supply through a process called fluoridation.

GINGIVITIS

Inflammation of the gum tissue. The most common form of gingivitis, and the most common form of periodontal disease overall, is in response to plaque. Gingivitis is reversible with good oral hygiene. However if not controlled, can progress to periodontitis- where the inflammation results in tissue destruction which can ultimately lead to tooth loss. Gingival sulcus refers to the potential space between the tooth and gum.

IMMUNOSUPPRESSIVE DRUGS

A class of drugs that suppress or reduce the strength of the body's immune system. They are also called anti-rejection drugs. Immunosuppressant drugs also are used to treat autoimmune diseases such as scleroderma as the condition attacks its own tissue. By suppressing this reaction, immunosuppressant drugs can help control the impact of the condition on the body.

MICONAZOLE

An antifungal agent commonly applied to the skin or to mucous membranes to cure fungal infections. It includes some antibacterial properties.

MICROSTOMIA

Reduced mouth opening. Micro translates to small and stomia translates to mouth.

MOUTH ULCERS

Mouth ulcers are painful round or oval sores that form in the mouth, most often on the inside of the cheeks or lips. They're usually white, red, yellow or grey in colour and are inflamed (red and swollen) around the edge. Mouth ulcers can be uncomfortable, especially when you eat, drink or brush your teeth, but are usually harmless.

NIFEDIPINE

Given to treat hypertension (high blood pressure), or to help prevent chest pain. Also prescribed in the treatment of Raynaud's phenomenon - a condition caused by poor circulation to the hands and feet.

ORAL MUCOSA

The membrane lining the inside of the mouth. Changes indicative of disease are seen as alterations in the oral mucosa lining the mouth, which can reveal systemic conditions, such as diabetes or vitamin deficiency, or chronic tobacco or alcohol use.

ORAL THRUSH (OR FUNGAL INFECTIONS)

Oral thrush is a fungal infection of the mouth. It is not contagious and usually successfully treated with antifungal medication. It is also called oral candidosis (or candidiasis) because it is caused by a group of yeasts called Candida.

ORAL ULCERATION

See Mouth Ulcers.

PILOCARPINE

A drug used to treat dry mouth and glaucoma. It is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines, a list of the most important medication needed in a basic health system.

SALICYLATE GELS

It is used to relieve pain and discomfort associated with common mouth ulcers. It also helps to relieve pain and inflammation in the mouth caused by dentures and braces.

SJOGREN'S SYNDROME (OR SICCA SYNDROME)

The body's white blood cells destroy the exocrine glands, specifically the salivary and lacrimal glands that produce saliva and tears. See also the British Sjögren's Syndrome Association (BSSA) - www.bssa.uk.net.

STOMATITIS

Inflammation of the mouth and lips. It refers to any inflammatory process affecting the mucous membranes of the mouth and lips, with or without oral ulceration.

VASODILATOR THERAPY

Medications that dilate (open) blood vessels. They work directly on the muscles in the walls of your arteries, preventing the muscles from tightening and the walls from narrowing. As a result, blood flows more easily through your arteries, your heart doesn't have to pump as hard and your blood pressure is reduced.