Glossitis, Tongue Inflammation

Glossitis is an inflammation of the tongue. Changes in the appearance of the tongue may be a primary tongue disorder. This means the problem is only in the tongue. Glossitis may be a symptom of other disorders.

CAUSES

- Excessive alcohol.
- Multiple allergies.
- Infections.
- Tobacco and nicotine use.
- Anemia.
- Mechanical injury.
- Spicy foods.
- Vitamin B deficiency.
- Damage from chemicals or hot food or drink.

SYMPTOMS

There may be swelling and color changes in the tongue. Sometimes the surface of the tongue may look smooth. This disorder may be painless. But the tongue is usually sore and tender. It can be fiery red if condition is caused by deficiency of B vitamins. It is sometimes pale if there is anemia. Anemia means there are not enough red blood cells. There may be problems with chewing, swallowing and speaking. In some cases, glossitis may result in severe tongue swelling that blocks the airway.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis of glossitis is made easily by physical exam and asking for a history. Sometimes blood tests may be done.

TREATMENT

- The goal of treatment is to reduce inflammation. Hospitalization is usually not necessary unless tongue swelling is severe.
- Good oral hygiene is important. This means good tooth brushing at least twice a day, and flossing daily for treatment and prevention.
- Corticosteroids such as prednisone may be given to reduce the redness and soreness.
- Medications may be prescribed if the cause of glossitis is an infection.
- Other problems such as anemia and nutritional deficiencies are treated. This may be a dietary change or vitamin supplements. Avoid hot or spicy foods, alcohol, and tobacco. This lessens the discomfort.
- Avoid anything that is irritating to your mouth or tongue.

Glossitis usually responds well to treatment if the cause of it is removed or treated.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- Symptoms of glossitis persist for longer than 10 days.
- Tongue swelling is severe and breathing, speaking, chewing, or swallowing difficulties are present.
- You have no relief from medications given.
- You develop difficulties breathing.

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