Trench Mouth, Vincent's Stomatitis
Acute Necrotizing Ulcerative Gingivitis

Trench mouth is a sudden, painful sore (*ulceration*) of the gums (*gingival tissues*) which is caused by germs (*bacteria*). Trench mouth is a painful form of gingivitis. Gingivitis means redness and soreness of the gums. The term "trench mouth" comes from World War I. The condition was common when the disorder appeared among soldiers in the trenches. The mouth normally contains a balance of all the germs growing in it. When the balance is upset and too many germs start growing, it can cause painful ulcers on the gums. It is an uncommon disorder which usually affects young adults.

CAUSES
Poor nutrition, poor oral hygiene, smoking, emotional distress and other problems in the mouth may help cause trench mouth.

SYMPTOMS
The most common symptoms are:
- Painful gums which are red, swollen, and covered with a grayish film. There may be destruction of tissue between the teeth due to the ulcerations.
- Gum bleeding with even minor brushing or irritation
- Ulcerations of the gums along with a foul taste in the mouth and bad breath.
- Running a temperature and swollen glands in your neck are common.

DIAGNOSIS
- Your caregiver can usually make this diagnosis by examining you.
- Sometimes x-rays and cultures may be used to help with the diagnosis.

TREATMENT
- Treatment is aimed at relief of symptoms and getting rid of the infection.
- Antibiotics may be prescribed. These are medications which kill the germs in your mouth.
- Good oral hygiene is necessary. Thorough tooth brushing and flossing must be performed often. This should be done after meals and at bedtime. Your caregiver may be able to help by suggesting a soothing rinse or the use of a local pain killing medication such as viscous lidocaine before brushing.
- Warm salt water rinses made up of a teaspoon of salt in a pint of warm water may be helpful. If the rinse is painful, dilute the solution more.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. Finish all antibiotics if they were prescribed. Do not stop them just because you start feeling better.
- Follow your dentist's instructions for teeth cleaning during this infection and follow up with all your caregivers as suggested.
- Avoid smoking, alcohol, and irritating foods. You will know immediately which foods will irritate your mouth if you make a wrong choice. Typically, these will be spicy, sour, or citrus foods.

PROGNOSIS
Trench mouth usually responds to treatment. Untreated, it may spread to the surrounding tissues and cause destruction including loss of teeth, periodontitis, and after a short while, poor nutrition.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:
- You develop pain or swelling in your face.
- You begin to run a high fever or temperature over 100.4° F (37.2° C).
- You are unable to take fluids or eat food comfortably.

- Your medications do not seem to be working and you feel you are getting worse.
- Your medications are not relieving your pain.
- You develop a stiff neck or a severe headache which is unrelieved with medications.

Document Released: 03/23/2006 Document Re-Released: 04/05/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.