

HEALTH WISDOM

A diet to soothe mouth ulcers

Consume more of carrot juice, rich in vitamin C; (below) leafy vegetables, rich in iron
PHOTOS: ISTOCK



Anjali Mukerjee

One in five people get recurrent mouth ulcers. They are small painful sores that occur inside the mouth. You might get them on the inside of your lips, the insides of your cheeks, the base of your gums or under your tongue. These small blister-like sores are quite different from the fever blisters, which usually appear on the outside of your lips or the corners of the mouth. Mouth ulcers usually pop up alone, but may also show up in small clusters.

The exact cause of mouth ulcers is not completely understood, but they seem to be triggered by stress, poor nutrition, food allergies and menstrual periods. Attempts to find bacteria or viruses linked with the condition have not proven fruitful, although an allergy to a type of bacteria, commonly found in the mouth, may cause some people to develop mouth ulcers. The sores also might be an allergic reaction to certain foods. Among others, any injury to the mouth such as scratching by abrasive foods or a stray toothbrush bristle can trigger outbreaks of a mouth ulcer. Hormonal disorders can contribute to mouth ulcers, as can deficiencies of iron, folic acid, or vitamin B12.

The initial symptoms usually begin with a tingling or burning sensation that you feel before other symptoms develop. Then after a day or so, it bursts, leaving an open, shallow white or yellowish ulcer with a red border. Occasionally, someone who gets a mouth

ulcer may also develop a fever and feel sluggish and uncomfortable.

Most mouth ulcers will heal on their own in a few days to a couple of weeks. While you're waiting for them to disappear, there are some things you can do:

- Avoid spicy foods and acidic foods such as lemons, tomatoes or citrus fruits as they can be extremely painful on these open wounds. You should also restrict food with sharp edges such as nuts or potato chips, which can poke or rub the sore. You need to be careful while brushing your teeth, too

- Several studies show that one in seven people with mouth ulcers is deficient in folate, iron and vitamin B, and it's strongly recommended to increase these nutrients in your daily diet to prevent sores or to quicken recovery. Peas, beans and lentils are excellent folate sources; leafy vegetables, egg yolk and fortified cereals are high in iron, and whole grains and sprouts are high in B vitamins
- Adequate intake of vitamin C (basil leaf juice, gooseberry juice,

carrot juice) and antioxidants are effective at preventing or healing of mouth ulcers, particularly for people who are under a lot of stress or who consume a lot of alcohol or smoke

- Gentle and good oral hygiene may help in the prevention of some types of mouth ulcers. It may also help to prevent some complications from mouth ulcers. Good oral hygiene includes brushing the teeth at least twice a day, flossing at least once a day, and getting regular professional dental cleaning and examination
- Your doctor may recommend antibiotics to help correct the ulcer. Topical (rubbed on) antihistamines, antacids, corticosteroids, or other soothing preparations may be recommended for applying on top of the ulcer.

If you have mouth ulcers that do not get better after a few days or if you find that the sores keep coming back, or if they make you feel so sick that you are unable to eat properly, then it's better that you see your doctor or dentist.



BACK TO ROOTS



Gorge on sprouts. They are rich in proteins, which help suppress hunger hormones and aid in satiety

Sprouted grains have always been an integral part of Indian cuisine. With the month of April dedicated to them, we look at their several health benefits

Sarojini Jose

For the month of April, the Whole Grains Council has highlighted all the sprouted grains in their section, grain of the month. Apparently, the simple act of soaking grains overnight turns plain grains into powerhouses of nutrients. We get experts to give us the low-down on not just their health benefits but also for whom it might not be suitable for.

WHY SPROUTED WHOLEGRAINS?

According to Edwina Raj, senior dietitian, Aster CMI, the process of sprouting reduces the anti-nutritional factors, allergens and brings out enzymes. "Sprouting increases the amount and bioavailability of nutrients including proteins, vitamins

While raw spouts are a good source of vitamin C and folate, those with compromised immunity should consume them in limited quantities PHOTOS: ISTOCK

(A, B, K, C) and minerals. This turns them into potential and inexpensive nutritional powerhouses. Further, this makes them alkaline and a rich source of antioxidants," says Raj.

Sprouting legumes such as green gram, Bengal gram, chickpea, cowpea and nuts makes them easier to digest. Also, apart from enhancing the digestibility of nutrients, it also reduces cooking time and is, therefore, more economical. Further, cooking sprouted grains prevents them from causing gas and bloating, too.

Giving an example between sprouted and plain grains, Munmun Ganerwal, nutritionist and founder, Yuktahaar, shares, "A study from the University of Minnesota mentioned that the nutrient density of sprouted wheat was hundred times higher than in whole wheat,

specifically in vitamin C, folic acid, niacin and riboflavin (vitamin B2)."

THE RIGHT TIME TO EAT THEM

The best time to consume sprouts is for lunch as they are a great source of fibre and aid in digestion, according to Dr Sweedal Trinidad, dietician, PD Hinduja Hospital & MRC.

Other experts believe that sprouts are best consumed as a snack or as complements or side dishes along with your breakfast or lunch. Sprouts are also rich in proteins, which help suppress hunger hormones and aid in satiety and so, are good to start your day with.

WHAT IS PREFERRED - RAW, BOILED, OR WELL-COOKED?

In a letter published in

FACT OVER MYTH

Myth: Sprouts raise body heat

Fact: Pulses do not contribute to an increase in body heat. There is no scientific evidence to prove its effect on producing heat or cold. However, yoghurt can be added to give a symbiotic effect, as pulses are a prebiotic and yoghurt is a probiotic which may be beneficial to gut health.

-Naaznin Husein, nutrition expert, InnerBeing

moisture also helps bacteria thrive and so, it is better to eat safe.

Raj concurs, stating that raw sprouts harbour bacterial growth due to moist environment, which has been associated with outbreaks of food-borne illnesses and can cause serious infections and diseases in vulnerable groups as well as those with compromised immunity.

However, healthy individuals can afford to consume them raw since vital nutrients and enzymes are deactivated or destroyed while cooking them, especially vitamin C and folate.

WHO SHOULD STAY AWAY FROM SPROUTS?

Raw or undercooked sprouts should be avoided during pregnancy, and also by those with poor immunity such as infants, elderly and those on drugs and antibiotics, which suppress their body's immunity. Sprouts should also be consumed in a limited manner by those suffering from chronic diarrhoea.

With inputs from Nafisa Habib, dietician, Wockhardt Hospital and Dr Ashwini Konnur, nutritionist, AyurUniverse
• ht.cafe@htlive.com

PHOTOS: ISTOCK; FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

'Eating less after sunset has worked for me'

HEALTH-STRUCK WITH MUKTI MOHAN, DANCER-ACTOR

Anjali Shetty

Which is the one breakfast food that you must have?
I have a serving of a variety of fruits the first thing in the morning.

One fattening food item that you just can't resist?
It has to be caramel popcorn and tender coconut ice cream.

How do you get back in shape post a fattening indulgence?
I go for long-distance runs. It helps me get rid of all the calories gained because of the excess I ate.

Do you prefer mini meals? What do they normally contain?
Yes, I prefer good mini snacks that curb hunger such as makhana, peanut butter toast, yoghurt and fruit granola bowls.

A diet plan that always works for you?
I would say that the eating less after sunset had worked well for me.

Do you work out at home? What are the exercises you follow?
Running up and down the stairs, stretching using bands

and doing planks.

Which are your favourite physical activities?
Playing badminton and gymnastics.

A health tip that you rely on.
Hydrate well and one major advice would be to choose fructose over sucrose.

• anjali.shetty@htlive.com



You can feel caffeine buzz without actually drinking coffee: Study

The placebo effect of coffee can heighten arousal, ambition and focus in regular drinkers without them actually consuming the beverage, recent findings suggest.

As part of the study, a team of researchers explored the association between coffee and arousal to see if the brain's exposure to stimuli could deliver the same cognitive benefits as a caffeine buzz.

"As long as individuals see a connection between coffee and arousal, whatever its origin may be, mere exposure to coffee-related cues might trigger arousal in and of themselves without ingesting any form of caffeine," said Eugene Chan, lead researcher of the study, published in the Journal of Consciousness and Cognition.

According to the researchers, smelling coffee gives rise to the beverage's psychoactive, arousing effects. This is because the brains of habitual coffee



Robusta coffee fruits
PHOTO: REUTERS



Just the smell of coffee is enough to stir your senses
PHOTO: NYT

consumers are conditioned to respond to coffee in peculiar ways, as per Pavlov's dog theory.

"So walking past your favourite cafe, smelling coffee grounds, or even witnessing coffee-related cues in the form of advertising can trigger the chemical receptors in our body enough for us to obtain the same arousal sensations without consumption," Chan explained.

Researchers exposed 871 participants from Western

and Eastern cultures to coffee and tea-related cues across four separate experiments that would make them think of the substance without actually ingesting it.

The study centred on a psychological effect called 'mental construal'. This determines how individuals think and process information, whether they focus on narrow details or on the bigger picture.

The cognitive-altering effects of coffee were more

prevalent in participants from Western countries, where coffee is more popular and has connotations related to energy, focus, and ambition, compared to those from Eastern countries. Coffee was also associated with greater arousal than tea.

"Our research can offer intriguing implications, as it relies not on physiology but rather on psychological associations to change our cognitive patterns," Chan asserted.

-ANI