

MOUTH LESIONS: WHITE SPOTS

Most white spots are thickenings of normal mouth tissue in response to some form of irritant. The white spot may be firmer than the surrounding tissue due to this thickening. Less commonly, white spots can indicate an infection or disease process.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What causes White Spots?*

White spots in your mouth may be due to the following:

- Chronic cheek biting causing scar tissue or a "Fibroma" to form
- Smoking
- Repeated rubbing from an ill fitting denture
- Repeated rubbing from chewing food on gums in an area where teeth have been lost
- Yeast infection
- Lichen Planus (an autoimmune disorder)
- Syphilis
- Cancer

2. *Who is at risk for White Spots?*

People who smoke and those who experience dry mouth or a weakened immune system are more susceptible to yeast infections, which may appear as white spots. People who smoke often develop white areas in their mouth, which are caused by tissue irritation from the smoke. People who grind their teeth commonly develop white lines on their cheeks from trauma. Trauma also causes areas of whiteness when a denture is ill fitting or food rubs against a ridge area where teeth have been removed.

3. *What is my role in managing a White Spot?*

Note the size, location and duration of the spot. Determine if it is painful and recall if you may have traumatized the area. If a white spot persists beyond one week, have the area examined by your dentist.

4. *What can happen if I do nothing about the White Spots?*

If the white spot is the result of a disease process or a yeast infection, it will likely worsen if left untreated. If a white spot is caused by ongoing trauma, it will also worsen with time. In the rare event that it is cancer, it can lead to disfigurement or death if not diagnosed and treated in a timely manner.



Oral Cancer on the side of the tongue



"Fibroma" from Cheek Biting



"Lichen Planus"



Yeast Infection on the roof of the mouth associated with an upper denture