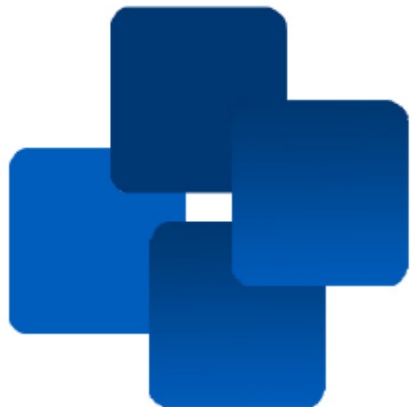


Geographic Tongue

Oral and Maxillofacial Department



The purpose of this leaflet is to help you understand geographic tongue

What is geographic tongue?

Geographic tongue is a condition of the tongue that affects approximately 3% of the population. It presents as red patches which can be bordered with whitish/grey areas. These patches are caused by the uneven shedding of the 'skin' of the tongue. Affected areas can include the top, sides and occasionally the under surface of the tongue.

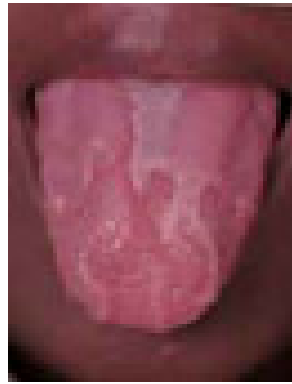
What causes geographic tongue?

Although its cause is uncertain geographic tongue has been found to run in families and occurs more frequently in people who suffer with environmental sensitivities such as allergies, eczema and asthma.

Who does it affect?

Geographic tongue affects all age groups and is commonly first noticed in infancy.

It is not something that can be passed on to others as it is not an infection.



How is it diagnosed?

As it has such a distinctive appearance geographic tongue can be diagnosed by a doctor or dentist without the need for any tests.

What symptoms might I get?

- Reddened, slightly raised lesions on the tongue
- Smooth patches on the tongue
- Grey/yellow or whitish borders
- Position of the patches changing over time
- Generally painless but can be hyper sensitive to hot, citrus and spicy foods and drinks

How is it treated?

While there is no known cure or commonly prescribed treatment for geographic tongue, there are ways of reducing the discomfort felt. Avoiding foods and drinks which cause pain is the most common way of reducing discomfort caused by geographic tongue. Simple mouthwashes can be obtained on prescription from your doctor or dentist should a change in diet not alleviate your symptoms.

Should I worry about geographic tongue?

No. Geographic tongue is a common, benign, harmless condition. Regular dental check ups are advised to monitor the tongue and provide peace of mind.

If you have any questions list them below and remember to ask your dentist next time you see him or her.

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You can request more information about the sources used in this leaflet.

You can request this information in a different format or another language.

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