

Geographic Tongue



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A 42-year-old woman presented with a painless white lesion on her tongue for a month. She had a similar episode 3 years back that had resolved spontaneously. On examination there were multiple annular reddish patches on the tongue surrounded by raised, white well-defined borders (Figure 1). A diagnosis of geographic tongue was made and the patient reassured about the benign nature of the condition. The lesions resolved after 2 months, and there is no evidence of recurrence at present. Geographic tongue is a common benign condition that affects 2%-3% of the population.¹ It is characterized by the development of smooth red areas of depapillation giving the tongue a map-like appearance.^{1,2} These lesions migrate over time; therefore, it is also called benign migratory glossitis. The etiology is unknown and most of the cases are asymptomatic; however, some patients may have burning sensation on eating spicy or acidic food.² The differential diagnosis includes oral lichen planus, erythematous candidiasis, leukoplakia, glossitis, and chemical burns.³ The clinical features and appearance are typical and biopsy is unnecessary. The lesions typically resolve spontaneously and no treatment is required.^{2,3} The prognosis is good; however, recurrences are common and new lesions can develop quickly in other areas of the tongue.^{2,3}



FIGURE 1. Tongue with areas of red smooth patches surrounded by raised white margins.

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