

Why is the roof of my mouth swollen?

By Jenna Fletcher | Last reviewed Mon 10 September 2018

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Causes Treatment and home remedies When to see a doctor

The roof of the mouth consists of a bony plate at the front and a non-bone, soft section at the back. Together, these serve as a barrier between the oral and nasal cavities. From time to time, the roof of the mouth may become swollen.

Swelling on the roof of the mouth may be due to several potential causes, most of which will resolve with minimal treatment. In less common cases, the swelling may be due to a more serious condition.

Other symptoms may accompany the swelling, including:

- blisters or other sores
- dry mouth
- muscle spasms
- pain or discomfort

Read on to learn about the possible causes of swelling on the roof of the mouth.

Causes

A range of conditions can cause a swollen roof of the mouth, including:

1. Sores in the mouth

Most common mouth sores, such as canker sores and cold sores, will appear on the gums, cheeks, or lips. In some cases, they may appear on the roof of the mouth.

Sores can cause pain, blisters, and swelling. Some people may notice pain or swelling before the sore appears.



Sores, injury, and squamous papillomas can cause a swollen roof of the mouth.

2. Injury or trauma

One of the most common causes of swelling on the roof of the mouth is an injury or trauma. Some of the most common causes of trauma include:

- eating a hard food that may impact the roof of the mouth
- eating or drinking an extremely hot item
- a scratch from a sharp piece of food

3. Dehydration

Dehydration can cause swelling on the roof of the mouth. Dehydration can cause a dry mouth, which can result in swelling if a person does not take steps to relieve the condition.

Some common causes of dehydration and dry mouth include:

- excessive alcohol intake
- certain medications
- not drinking enough water
- excessive sweating, particularly on hot days or while exercising
- illness

A person with dehydration that causes an electrolyte imbalance may also feel especially weak or experience muscle spasms.

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4. Mucoceles

A buildup of mucus can form inside a lumpy cyst that appears on the roof of the mouth called a mucocele. Mucoceles are typically painless and usually occur after a minor injury, such as a cut on the roof of the mouth.

They do not usually require treatment and may burst on their own. If a person has a mucocele that is particularly large or tends to recur, a doctor can safely drain it.

5. Squamous papillomas

The human papillomavirus (HPV) is responsible for the formation of squamous papillomas. Squamous papillomas are noncancerous masses that can form on the roof of the mouth.

These masses do not typically cause pain. However, once discovered and diagnosed, people should get them treated. It is possible that a doctor may need to perform surgery to remove the mass.

6. Underlying medical conditions

Rarely, a swollen roof of the mouth may be due to an underlying medical condition, such as oral cancer or viral hepatitis.

Oral cancer is uncommon. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 51,540 people in the United States will receive an oral cancer diagnosis in 2018.

Treatment and home remedies

Herbal teas may help relieve dehydration or electrolyte imbalance.

In most cases, a person can treat a swollen roof of the mouth at home or wait for it to heal on its own. Common injuries, such as a burn from a hot drink, will typically heal within a few days.

Cold sores or canker sores usually go away on their own. In some cases, a person may wish to use medications to help reduce the frequency or severity of cold sores.

In cases of dehydration or electrolyte imbalance, people can increase their liquid intake. It is best to drink non-alcoholic beverages, such as water or herbal tea.

If electrolytes are too low, a person may consider drinking a sports drink or juice to help restore the balance.

In cases where a person has an underlying condition, they should seek medical help from a doctor. Treatment options for cancer can include surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy.

When to see a doctor

Though most causes of swelling on the roof of the mouth do not require medical intervention, a person should speak to a doctor in some instances.

Some reasons to see a doctor include:

- pain that does not go away with over-the-counter medications
- unexplained swelling or swelling that lasts longer than a week
- swelling that is accompanied by other symptoms

In most cases, swelling on the roof of the mouth should not be a cause for concern. Typically, a person should see full recovery within a few days to a week.

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