



Burning Mouth Syndrome (BMS) – Information Sheet

Overview

Burning Mouth Syndrome is a condition where you feel a burning or scalding sensation in your mouth without a clear cause. It can affect the tongue, lips, gums, cheeks, roof of the mouth, or the entire mouth. The discomfort can be severe and persist for months or years.

Common Symptoms

- Burning, tingling, or numbness (often on the tongue)
- Dry mouth or increased thirst
- Altered taste (bitter or metallic)
- Loss of taste
- Symptoms may worsen throughout the day, persist all day, or come and go
- Eating or drinking may provide temporary relief
- No visible changes in the mouth

Causes

- **Primary BMS:** No identifiable cause; may involve nerve dysfunction.
- **Secondary BMS:** May be linked to:
 - Dry mouth (medications, illness, radiation)
 - Oral conditions (e.g., thrush, lichen planus)
 - Nutrient deficiencies (e.g., iron, B vitamins)
 - Allergies or reactions to foods, dental products
 - Acid reflux (GERD)
 - Certain medications or oral habits
 - Hormonal or endocrine disorders (e.g., diabetes, hypothyroidism)
 - Stress, anxiety, or depression

Risk Factors

- Female, especially postmenopausal
- Over 50 years old
- Smoking
- Recent illness or stressful events
- Certain chronic health conditions or medications

Complications

May lead to sleep problems, difficulty eating, or emotional distress (anxiety, depression).

Prevention & Management Tips

- Avoid tobacco, spicy or acidic foods, and carbonated drinks
- One strategy is Capsaicin desensitization reviewed below.
- Use gentle oral hygiene products
- Manage stress and mental health
- Work with your healthcare team for symptom control

Capsaicin Desensitization

Capsaicin, the active ingredient in chili peppers, triggers the release of a neurotransmitter called *substance P*. With repeated use, this may help desensitize the mucous membranes in your mouth and reduce pain and burning sensations. It may also improve altered taste sensations over time.

Instructions:

- Use Tabasco sauce, which contains ~300 parts per million of capsaicin. Desensitization may occur at concentrations as low as 100 ppm.
- Dilute **5 mL of Tabasco** in **10 mL of water**.
- Swish the mixture in your mouth, focusing on the areas of discomfort, for **15 seconds**.
- Repeat **3 times per session**.
- If no improvement: try a stronger solution (5 mL Tabasco in 5 mL water).
- If too strong: dilute further (5 mL Tabasco in 15 mL water).
- Always **rinse your mouth with water** after treatment.

Tips:

- Start with a tolerable concentration and increase as needed for best results.
- Perform this **3–4 times daily**.
- **Relief is gradual**; it may take **several weeks** to notice significant improvement.