

DOWN SYNDROME AND Rashes Around the Mouth

There are several types of rashes around the mouth that are common in children with Down syndrome.

WHAT TYPES OF RASHES ARE SEEN AROUND THE MOUTH, AND WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

1. Dry Lips (Cheilitis)

- » Peeling, scaly, cracked lips

2. Angular Cheilitis

- » Deep cracks at the corners of the mouth that sometimes bleed
- » Red, crusty sores around the corners of the mouth
- » These can be painful, especially when eating or opening the mouth wide.

3. Lip Fissures

- » Deep cracks in the lips that can bleed
- » These can be painful and burn, especially when eating.

4. Perioral Dermatitis

- » Tiny pink or skin-colored bumps around the mouth, but not on the lips
- » This rash sometimes goes around the nose and eyes.
- » The rash is usually not very bothersome. It can cause mild itching or burning.

WHAT CAUSES THESE RASHES?

Triggers may include:

- » Saliva or food
- » Weaker mouth muscles
- » A larger tongue
- » Placing hands or objects in the mouth
- » Difficulty brushing teeth
- » Changes in weather, especially from warm to cold
- » Medications

HOW ARE RASHES AROUND THE MOUTH TREATED?

- » For dry lips and lip fissures, moisturizing ointments can help. These should be applied throughout the day, especially before meals and bedtime. A topical steroid may be helpful for some patients.
- » Moisturizers can also be helpful for angular cheilitis. Topical medications such as anti-yeast, antibiotic, or steroid creams may also be used.
- » For perioral dermatitis, using topical antibiotic or anti-inflammatory medicines can help the rash go away. To learn more, please check out the Patient Perspectives **Perioral Dermatitis Handout**.

CARING FOR THE LIPS AND SKIN AROUND THE MOUTH

For rashes around the mouth, keeping the lips moisturized is very important.

>> Lip Moisturizer Tips

- Pick a plain ointment such as petroleum jelly.
- Avoid products with flavors or smells. Moisturizers made from flowers and plants can also irritate the lips.
- Apply these ointments before eating, before going outside, and before bedtime.

>> More Tips for Healthy Lips and Mouth

- Placing the hands or objects in the mouth can spread saliva onto the skin around the mouth. Saliva has enzymes that can breakdown the skin. Talk to your child's doctor or occupational therapist about strategies to stop this habit.
- Children with Down syndrome often have weaker mouth muscles and a larger tongue. This can also lead to saliva around the mouth. Talk to your child's doctor or speech therapist about how to manage this.
- Ask your child's school about bringing in lip moisturizers to apply frequently, especially before snacks and lunch.
- Visits to the dentist are important. Your child should go regularly to keep the mouth healthy. Talk with your child's dentist about oral care.



The Society for Pediatric Dermatology
8365 Keystone Crossing, Suite 107
Indianapolis, IN 46240
(317) 202-0224
www.pedsderm.net

Authors:
Allison Kranyak, MD
James Treat, MD
Diana Zarowin, BA

Reviewers:
Lacey Kruse, MD
Jillian Rork, MD
Kishore Vellody, MD

The Society for Pediatric Dermatology cannot be held responsible for any errors or for any consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this handout.

© 2024 The Society for Pediatric Dermatology