



Traumatic Ulcerative Granuloma

What is a traumatic ulcerative granuloma (TUG)?

A traumatic ulcerative granuloma (TUG) is a benign and often painful sore in the mouth. This lesion can also be called an eosinophilic ulcer, traumatic eosinophilic granuloma, or traumatic ulcerative granuloma with stromal eosinophilia. TUG most commonly affects the tongue but can occur in other areas of the mouth such as inside of lips, inner cheeks, or floor of the mouth. The lesion is characterized by ulceration, and it may sometimes grow rapidly or create a mass which in some cases can resemble an oral cancer. TUG can occur at any age and can be of any size.

What causes TUG?

Traumatic ulcerative granuloma, as the name suggests, is typically caused by trauma. In more than half the cases, the patient does not recall traumatizing the area although this may have occurred during sleep. Unlike a regular canker sore which heals within two weeks, inflammation from the ulcer penetrates into deeper tissue such that the lesion is not able to heal properly. As such, the ulcer may persist for months. TUG is not an infection and you cannot spread to family members. Also, TUG is not cancerous or even potentially cancerous.

How do we know it is TUG?

A dental specialist can usually diagnose TUG based on a good history, report of trauma and the appearance and location of the ulcer. In general a biopsy is required to confirm the diagnosis and rule out other conditions.

How do we treat TUG?

TUG can resolve on its own with no treatment. If a trauma source can be identified (for example a poorly fitting denture), it should be taken care of. In most cases, topical steroid gels or rinses may be prescribed to help promote healing. You will likely be treated with topical steroids 3-4 times a day for a few weeks. Sometimes if there is a large ulcer, your doctor may recommend treating the area "intralesionally" (with a steroid injection directly into the involved area), to speed the healing process. In severe cases, steroid tablets such as prednisone may need to be taken for several weeks to help heal the lesion. If a biopsy is taken, this can often speed the healing time. If you are having pain from the ulcer, you may be given a mouthwash to numb the area.

What can I expect?

Healing time varies for TUG and may take weeks to months until there is complete resolution. Most patients respond well to a combination of intralesional and topical steroid therapy. In some cases TUG requires surgical excision. TUGs do not typically recur but may do so if there is repeated trauma to the area.

