

Fissured/ Geographic Tongue



GEOGRAPHIC TONGUE

The tongue is normally covered by lumps (papillae) which allow the tongue to grip food. Some of the papillae are also associated with taste buds. A geographic tongue has smooth patches where the papillae are absent. It occurs in approximately 2% of the population and is more common in women than men. The cause is unknown but may run in families (genetic) or be linked with allergies. You may experience discomfort or burning

especially with spicy and acidic foods. The patches may change size and colour over hours and may completely disappear. The condition is generally harmless and does not pose a health risk.

FISSURED TONGUE

A fissured tongue is when there are grooves of varying depths over the surface and on the sides of the tongue. It is not uncommon (occurring in approximately 2% of the population). Although the cause is unknown, there are some families in which fissured tongues are clustered suggesting they are partly genetic. There are some associations with tongue fissures (geographic tongue, Melkersson-Rosenthal linked with facial palsy, Down's syndrome) but most occur on their own.

WHAT TROUBLE DO THE FISSURES CAUSE?

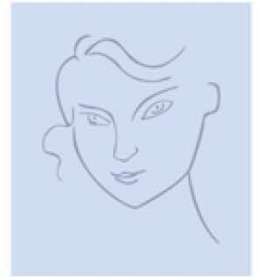
Generally they do not cause trouble however if deep enough, food and material may become entrapped and cause irritation and discomfort. If this occurs, you should carefully rinse your mouth with dilute mouth wash after meals and you may use a soft toothbrush to gently brush material out of the cracks in your tongue.

HOW CAN GEOGRAPHIC TONGUE BE TREATED?

Most people are satisfied with explanation and reassurance that geographic tongue does not cause a health risk and that some food sensitivity is common. You should avoid irritating foods (especially spicy or acidic), strong toothpastes (especially whitening or tartar control pastes), smoking and strong alcohol. Try a toothpaste for sensitive teeth.

If you are having significant discomfort, Dr Iseli may try some therapies to see if they help including:

- antihistamines for allergies
- topical antifungals for fungal superinfections
- zinc supplements if you could be zinc deficient
- steroid containing mouth wash



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