

MOUTH LESIONS: COLORED SPOTS

COLORED SPOTS IN YOUR MOUTH MAY BE RED, BROWN OR BLACK IN APPEARANCE. THE DIFFERENT COLORS INDICATE DIFFERENT THINGS. IN RARE CIRCUMSTANCES, COLORED SPOTS MAY INDICATE POTENTIAL CANCERS. THESE ARE MORE COMMON IN PEOPLE OVER SIXTY YEARS OLD AND ARE TYPICALLY LOCATED UNDERNEATH THE TONGUE OR AT THE VERY BACK ROOF OF THE MOUTH.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What causes colored spots?

- **Red Spots:**
Red spots are mostly due to the presence of inflammation, infection, trauma or surface blood vessels. Diseases such as thrombocytopenia, (a blood disorder) or amyloidosis can create red mouth spots in your mouth as can forms of yeast infections.
- **Brown Spots:**
Brown spots are mostly due to pigmentation in the gums or lining of your mouth. Ethnic populations with darker skin tones tend to have these brown spots. They are a variation of normal mouth tissue appearance.
- **Black Spots:**
Black spots are mostly "amalgam tattoos" and occur when gums or tissues are traumatized during the placement or removal of silver fillings. If a small amount of silver filling material enters your tissue, it will remain and appear as a black spot after the area heals. Amalgam tattoos do not grow or change over time and do not pose a health risk.

2. Who is at risk for colored spots in their mouth?

- People that smoke, have a dry mouth or have a weakened immune system are all more susceptible to yeast infections which cause inflammation and appear as areas of red tissue with white in the middle. Dental or periodontal infections often show up as red areas or spots. People with bite problems, broken teeth or ill fitting dentures often have traumatized tissues which look red and even ulcerated. Blood vessels tend to become more apparent in your mouth as you age and they show up as red to dark purple bumps. As noted above, certain diseases are related to red spots, certain ethnicities predispose you to brown spots and certain dental histories contribute to black spots or "amalgam tattoos."

3. What is my role in managing colored spots in my mouth?

- Note the size, location and duration of the spot. Determine if it is painful and recall if you traumatized the area. If a colored spot persists beyond one week have the area examined by your dentist.

4. What will happen if I do nothing about the colored spot in my mouth?

- Although some colored spots are normal variations of mouth tissue, many indicate underlying disease processes. If your colored spot is caused by inflammation or infection it will likely get worse as time goes on. If it is caused by ongoing trauma it will also worsen with time. In the rare event that it is cancer, it can lead to disfigurement or death if not diagnosed and treated in a timely manner.



Gum Inflammation



Gum Pigmentation



Amalgam Tattoo