Chinese medicine treats “Mouth ulcer”

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Mouth ulcers can occur at any age. Young adults, the elderly and females appear to be more susceptible.

Western medicine associates mouth ulcers to digestive function disorders, hormone imbalance, emotional stress, emotional imbalances, genetics, sleep disorders, run down immune system, or deficiencies in zinc, iron, folic acid and vitamin B12. Western medicine treats moth ulcers with multivitamins, minerals, antibiotics and steroid treatment.

Traditional Chinese Medicine diagnosis and treatment of mouth ulcers are:

1. **External heat toxin**: 外感时毒型
   - **Symptoms**: Sudden onset of flu, cold sores appear on the lips, (blister first and then burst leaching to oral mucosal lining), ulcers are red in color and very painful, combined with chill and fever, sore throat, running nose, sneezing, red tongue and floating, rapid pulse.
   - **Principle treatment**: Clear heat toxin and resolve ulcer.
   - **Formula**: Yin qiao san
     - **Herbs**: Yinhua (Flos Lonicerae), lianqiao (Fructus Forsythiae), zhuye (Herba Lophatheri), jingjie (Herba Schizonepetae), bohe (Herba Menthae), niubangzi (Fructus Arctii)), lugen (Rhizoma Phragmitis), jiegeng (Radix Platycodi), shenggancao (Radix Glycyeehizae).

   This type of mouth ulcer is relatively easy to treat, however it may take a few days to heal.

2. **Heat in stomach and spleen**: 脾胃积热型
   - **Symptoms**: Multiple large ulcers, very swollen with pus on the surface, fetid smell and ghastly taste, gum bleeding and soreness, thirst, constipation, yellow urination, red tongue thick yellow coating with slippery rapid pulse.
   - **Principle treatment**: Clear damp heat from the spleen & stomach.
   - **Formula**: 六味地黄丸
     - **Herbs**: Zhigancao (Radix Glycyeehizae), banxia (Rhizoma), ganjiang (Dry Ginger), chuanhuang glian (Rhizoma Coptidi), huangqin (Radix Scutellanriae), dangshen (Radix Codonopsis), dazao (Fructus Jujubae).

   This type of mouth ulcer requires treatment in conjunction with changes in eating habits. Avoid food that is cold & hot in nature. Take the necessary time to recover or the ulcer may reoccur. The patient must make the necessary changes in their current life style to avoid future mouth ulcers.
3. **Heart and kidney yin deficiency**: 心肾阴虚型

**Symptoms**: Multiple ulcers, fresh and red in colour with varying shape and size, pain is more severe at night, combined with palpitation, restlessness, insomnia with a lot of dreams, poor memory, dizziness, tinnitus, pain in lower back and knees, dry throat accompanied with thirst, red tongue with thin yellow coating, thready rapid pulse.

**Principle treatment**: Clear deficient heat by nourishing heart & kidney yin

**Formula**: `<zhaidihiwangwan> + <daochisan>`

**Herbs**: Shengdi (Radix Rehmanniae), zhimu (Rhizoma Anemarrhenae), huangbai (Cortex Phellodendri), shanyao (Rhizoma Dioscoreae), zexie (Rhizoma Alismatis), shanyurou (Fructus Comi), fuling (Poria), mudanpi (Cortex Moutan), zhuye (Herba Lophatheri), shenggancao (Radix Glycyeehizae).

This type of mouth ulcer can be treated quickly once the cause of the heart & kidney yin deficiency has been identified. Various factors can damage yin. For example: taking long term medication (anti depressants, anti Parkinson’s drugs, anti psychotic drugs), after serous illness, heavy bleeding (during child birth); long term night sweats.

4. **Spleen and kidney yang deficiency**: 脾肾阳虚型

**Symptoms**: Chronic mouth ulcers with pale discharge (not red), few in quantity, often combined with poor appetite, cold limbs, dry mouth with preference to sip warm drinks, feels full quickly, loose stools, swollen pale tongue with white greasy coating, slow and weak pulse.

**Principle treatment**: Warm spleen and kidney yang, eliminate dampness.

**Formula**: `<guifuzhulingtang>` or `<fuzilizhongtang>`

**Herbs**: Zhifuzi (Radix Aconiti Lateralis Preparata), rougui (Cortex Cinnamomi), fuling (Poria), shanyao (Rhizoma Dioscoreae), chao baizhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), huangqi (Radix Astragali), dangshen (Radix Codonopsis), chenpi (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae), zhigancao (Radix Glycyeehizae).

This type of mouth ulcer appears very serious. It is very swollen, pale in color and affects the patient long term. The ulcer can be treated without difficulty, however the patient must cooperate and make the necessary changes to their life style by avoiding anything cold in nature and is required to take herbal pills to help promote their yang qi.

5. **Yin blood deficiency**: 阴血不足

**Symptoms**: Mouth ulcer often occur before or after menstruation, combined with heavy bleeding, red in color, five heart heat, thirst with preference for cold water, yellow urination, constipation, thin and red tongue with slight yellow coating, thready & rapid pulse.

**Principle treatment**: Nourish yin and blood to clear deficient heat.

**Formula**: `<siwutang>` or `<yiguanjian>`

**Herbs**: Danggui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis), baishao (Radix Paeoniae Alba), chuanxiong (Rhizoma Chuanxiong), sgengdi (Radix Rehmanniae), chuanniuxi (Radix Cyathulae), maiduong (Radix Ophiopogonis), heshouwu (Radix Polygoni Multiflori), gouqizi (Fructus Lycii), chishao (Radix Paeoniae Rubra), shihu (Herba Dendrobii), beishashen (Radix Glehniae), xiangfu
(Rhizoma Cyperi), shanyao (Rhizoma Dioscoreae). Shenggancao (Radix Glycyrrhizae).

This type of mouth ulcer is common, it occurs either before or after menstruation. Treatment must also coincide with the basic menstrual cycle, allowing time for the body to recover. It also requires the patient to cooperate and make necessary changes to their life style.

6. **Spleen qi deficiency**: 脾胃虚弱

**Symptoms:** Recurrent multiple mouth ulcers, pale & swollen ulcer with invagination in the ulcer centre, easily tired, poor appetite, cold limbs, pale complexion, loose stool, pale & swollen tongue with thin or thick white greasy coating, soft or slippery and weak pulse.

**Principle treatment:** Tonifying spleen and stomach to eliminate dampness.

**Formula:** <liujunzitang>+

**Herbs:** Dhangshen (Radix Salviae Miltiorrhizae), chaobaizhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), fuling (Poria), sharen (Fructus Amomi), xiangfu (Rhizoma Cyperi), shanyao (Rhizoma Dioscoreae), zhigancao (Radix Glycyrrhizae).

This type of treatment requires time as the function of the spleen & stomach builds up slowly. The patient will need to take responsibility for their digestive system, specifically with diet therapy, keeping regular emotions, frequent exercise and ensuring enough good quality sleep.

7. **Liver fire or liver damp heat**: 肝火上炎 OR 肝经湿热

**Symptoms:** Ulcers on the sides of the tongue, red with yellow discharge, very painful, often combine with red eyes, bitter taste, thirst, angry, strong appetite, constipation, eye discharge resembling sticky mucus, red tongue with yellow fur or yellow greasy coating or dry yellow fur, taut and rapid pulse.

**Principle treatment:** Clear liver heat or clear liver damp & heat.

**Formula:** < danzhixiaoyaowan>or <longdanxiegantang>

**Herbs:** Zhizi (Fructus gardeniae), mudanpi (Cortex Moutan), baoshao (Radix Paeoniae Alba), shanyao (Rhizoma Dioscoreae), fuling (Poria), chaihu: or longdancao, zhizi, huangqin, chaihu, danggui, shengdi ,zexie, mutong, shenggancao (Radix Glycyrrhizae).

For successful treatment the patient must avoid being angry and eating spicy food.

**External herbal medicine:**

Xiguashuang(西瓜霜), shuangliaohoufengsan（双料喉风散）, yunnanbaiyao（云南白药）, weishengsu C powder（维生素 C 粉）, propolis film(蜂胶口腔溃疡膜).

**Life style:**

1. Keep a regular life style, eat at regular intervals without over indulging in greasy or spicy food, go to bed early and get enough good quality sleep, do not drink excessive amounts of alcohol and drink sufficient amounts of water.
2. Keep optimistic and try to avoid erratic emotions.
3. Oral hygiene is essential
4. Do not overdo things.

5. Eat a variety of food, vegetables and fruits that are suitable for your body type (Yin and yang balance).

6. Participate in regular exercise and keep your body fit.

7. Take multivitamins (1-2 tablets) and zinc (15mg) per day.

8. When the ulcers have healed it is beneficial to receive post-crisis treatment (herbal pills, diet therapy, lifestyle advice).

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**Case study**

1. Female, 73 years old has suffered from mouth ulcers for more than 2 years.

The patient's mouth has multiple red ulcers (under the tongue, on the tongue, inside of gums, on the roof of mouth, inside of lips), varying in size, the ulcers have a little pus on the surface, however, they do not appear swollen. The patient has also suffered from poor sleep for many years, she can only eat a small amount of food due to the painful ulcers and as a result has lost a lot of weight. Her spirits are low; her energy is very poor, she feels thirsty but is unable to drink due to mouth pain and stomach fullness, she has heart palpitations and feels anxious, she has dry eyes and lower back pain, her urine is yellow, stool is dry and her tongue looks red and dry with a thin yellow coating, the pulse is thin and rapid.

Previous treatments include antibiotics and steroids. Her Doctor expressed concern that the ulcers may develop into cancer, however, a biopsy result is normal.

Treatment date 15/01/09:

**TCM diagnosis:** yin deficiency heat (heart, liver & kidney)

**Principle treatment:** Nourishing yin clear the deficiency heat and calm shen.

**Formula:** <zhibandihuangtang> +

**Herbs:** Zhimu (Rhizoma Anemarrhenae), huangbai (Cortex Phllodendri), shengdi (Radix Rehmanniae), baishao (Radix Pae), suanzaoren (Semen Ziziphi Spinosae), baihe (Bulbus Lilii), danshen (Radixsalviae miltiorrhizae) , shanyurou (Fructus Comi) , zexie (Phizoma Alismatis) , fuling(Poria), shanyao (Rhizoma Dioscoreae) , yejiaoteng (Caulis Polygoni Multiflori), wuweizi (Fructus Schisandrae), shenggancao (Radix Glycyehizae).

External use propolis mouth ulcer film.

Taking into account the curative affect of the herbal medicine the patient felt more inclined to eat. On the second day of treatment the patient advised me she had a very painful sensation in the mouth and that bleeding had begun. I was able to determine that the food had stimulated the
surface of the ulcer, breaking it down, causing the bleeding. The patient continued with the herbal medicine recovering two weeks later.

After the herbal treatment, I prescribed her <Tianwangbuxinwan> pills for post crisis management. She has taken <Tianwangbuxinwan> for 3 months and has not had an ulcer for 5 months. I have advised her to stop taking the herbal pills unless she cannot sleep properly.

2. Male, 36 years old has had a large pustule on the left side of his tongue for 2 days.

2 days ago the patient had an argument and then ate a spicy evening meal. During the night his tongue was very sore and upon waking he found a large pustule on the left side of his tongue. The patient also has a bitter taste in his mouth, is thirsty with a preference for cold drinks, has not had a bowel movement for 3 days and has a yellow discharge from his eyes. He feels irritable and still very angry. His tongue is red with 1 x 1.5 cm pustule on the liver area (middle of left hand side of the tongue), it looks very red and swollen with yellow pus on the top. His pulse is taut and rapid.

**TCM diagnosis:** Liver damp and heat (More heat)

**Principle treatment:** Clear damp & heat from liver.

**Formula:** <Longdanxiegantang>±

**Herbs:** Longdancao (Radix Gentianae), huangqin (Radix Scutellariae), chaihu (Radix Bupleuri), baishao (Radix Paeoniae Alba), zhizi (Fructus Gardeniae), danggu (Radix Angelicae Sinensis), shengdi (Radix Rehmanniae), zexie (Rhizoma Alismatis), fuling (Poria), shanyao (Radix Dioscoreae), shenggancao (Radix Glycyehizae).

After three packs of herbal medicine the patient felt much improved. He continued with <danzhixiaoyaowan> for one week post crisis management. The ulcer has completely healed.

3. Female, 39 years old has had period cycle ulcers that are worse after menstruation for many years.

Her sleep is poor and light. She feels tired and sometimes experiences dizziness; her appetite is poor and feels full quickly; her period is heavy, the blood is light in color and occasionally has dark blood clots, she has dull period pain that is relieved by a warm water bottle on stomach; frequent urination, loose stools 2-3 times per day. Her tongue is pale with teeth marks and has a thin greasy white coating; her pulse is soft and week.

**TCM diagnosis:** Spleen Qi and blood deficiency

**Principle treatment:** Tonify spleen Qi and nourish blood.

**Formula:** <Guipitang>
**Herbs:** Dangsheng (Radix Codonopsis), huangqi (Radix Astragali), chaobaizhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae), fuling (Poria), longyanrou (Arillus Longyan), heshouwu (Radix Polygoni Multiflori), xiangfu (Rhizoma Cyperi), baishao (Radix Paeonieae Alba), suanzaoren (Semen Ziziphi Apinosae), shengma (Rhizoma Cimicifugae), zhigancao (Radix Glycyeehizae).

After 3 months of herbal medicine the patient’s general health has improved. The ulcers occur less frequently and period has regulated. I prescribed her <Guipiwan> after the herbal treatment. Now her ulcers occur very occasionally, usually when she is run down. I have suggested she continue taking <Guipiwan> for a spleen and blood tonic and to moderate her life style.

**Conclusion:**

TCM treatment is very effective for mouth ulcers. During and after treatment, the patient should adhere to suitable diet therapy and life style choices according to their body type.