

Original Article

A Comprehensive Review on Canker Sores and Its Management by Harnessing the Herbal Approaches

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ABSTRACT

Canker sore is one of the most frequent oral ulcerative disorders that is observed in many people around the world. They are white-reddish, inflamed spots that form on the mucous membrane of the oral cavity or throat. They are very powerful and affect people's daily activities like eating, speaking, and swallowing. This abstract focuses on the causes, symptoms, and treatments available for canker sores. Many anaesthetics, antibiotics, topical steroids, or OTC medications are on the market for their treatment, but they may possess some negative effects. An alternative to this commercial medication is an herbal approach that is safe, effective and offer a range of benefits for managing canker sores, including anti-inflammatory, healing, and pain-relieving properties. Many herbs, such as turmeric and chamomile, have significant anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce the swelling and discomfort associated with these painful oral lesions. Aloe vera is particularly noted for its ability to promote mucosal healing, with its gel soothing the sore and aiding in tissue repair. Similarly, liquorice root supports healing through its anti-inflammatory and tissue-protective effects. Herbs like chamomile have natural analgesic properties that can ease the pain. By integrating natural treatments with conventional treatments can give a potential effect to overcome the painful symptoms of canker sores. The review begins by summarizing the pathophysiology of canker sores, to explore the beneficial herbal remedies in improvising strategies to combat ulcers by utilizing nature's pharmacy.

Keywords-Canker sores, Ulcers, Herbal approaches, Herbal remedies, Herbal treatment

1.INTRODUCTION

Canker Sore is one of the most prevalent oral ulcerative diseases ^[1]. Canker sores, also known as Aphthous Stomatitis or Recurrent Aphthous Stomatitis is an open sore that results from the breakage of the mucosal surface of the oral cavity ^[2]. It appears as a round and oval painful sore that forms in the mouth cavity largely on the tongue, lips, and within the cheeks ^[2,3]. The painful sore resolves within 10–14 days ^[4]. During the active disease phase, it may affect the quality of life by interfering with activities such as eating, speaking, drinking, and swallowing ^[4]. The exact cause of canker sore is not yet concealed, but some potential causes are mechanical injury, hormonal changes, vitamin deficiency, stress, drugs, microbial factors, food allergies, genetic predisposition^[1]. The management of canker sore aims on the reduction of painful symptoms by the use of analgesics, antibiotics, and topical steroid application. However, prolonged use of these medicaments may give some side effects and also these conventional medicines are not suitable for every person^[4,6]. A herbal alternative for these medicaments can be a game changer in today's world. It is astonishing that the majority of the world's population rely on traditional medicines^[5]. Traditional herbal medicine research has been heavily funded by countries like India, China, Nigeria, the USA, and the WHO itself ^[5]. Traditional herbalists have employed phytogenic substances to prevent and treat ulcers ^[1]. Today many studies and research going on for enhancing the efficacy and safety of herbal medicines.^[7] Herbs as a medicine offer a safer, effective and economical benefit compared to conventional medicines^[9]. Several novel

drug deliver systems having herbal medicament are formulated to enhance their efficacy such as nanoparticles, nanosuspensions ,dendrimers ,implants and hydrogels.^[8]So there is a need to explore such beneficial herbal options that are employed in ulcer healing ^[5].

2.TYPES OF CANKER SORES

There canker sore is classified into three types on the basis of their size and number.

2.1. Minor Canker Sores-(As shown in figure-2.1)They are small in size typically of diameter 2-8 mm. They take 10-14 days to heal.^[10]



Figure-2.1 (Minor canker sores)

2.2.Major Canker Sores-(As shown in figure-2.2)They are larger in size about 1 cm with wavy border. They take about weeks or months as healing time period.^[11]



Figure-2.2 (Major canker sores)

2.3.Herpetiform Canker Sores-(As shown in figure-2.3)They are characterized by group of small ulcers of 2-3 mm diameter. They could be many irregular lesions fuse together in the number of around 100 . They go away within 7-10 days without leaving any scar.^[12]



Figure-2.3 (Herpetiform canker sores)

3. ETIOLOGY^[13,14,15]

The exact cause of canker sore is unexplained but there are several factors that may be responsible for their occurrence.

3.1. Hormonal Fluctuations- Some women may experience bleeding gums or canker sore because of hormonal changes occurring during menstruation.

3.2. Stress- physiological instability and stress are associated with ulcers. It is observed that individual with high stress level are prone to develop canker sore.

3.3. Vitamin Deficiency- The canker sore occurs due to the low level of iron, folic acid, vitamin b12 or due to hematinic deficiency.

3.4. Mechanical injury- Any damage brought up by local anesthetic injections, dental procedures, biting of tongue or lips, bruises due to harsh brushing can cause canker sore.

3.5. Allergies and sensitivities- several food including chocolates, coffee, almond, tomatoes, strawberries may cause canker sore. Spicy or acidic food may also trigger the ulceration.

3.6. Immune system response- Abnormal T-cell mediated immunological response that may lead to destruction of healthy mouth cells may impact the generation of ulcers.

3.7. Genetic predisposition- Family history contributes to ulcers in about 40% of cases.

3.8. Others- bacterial or viral infections, digestion problem, dental braces.

4. SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of canker sore may vary according to their cause but they include:

- Pain and inflammation (due to isolation of foreign substance) at the site of ulcer. The affected are may feel rough, burning or tingling.^[17,18]
- Swelling is observed around the sore.^[19]
- Round and white or red patches confirms the presence of canker sore.^[20]
- Salty, spicy or acidic food exacerbate the irritation which causes discomfort while talking, chewing.^[17]

5. TREATMENT

In order to treat ulcers:

5.1. Mouth Rinses: To relieve discomfort, use mouthwash containing steroids, such as lidocaine or dexamethasone.^[21]

5.2. Topical Products: Pastes, gels, and creams that are available over-the-counter and through prescription can help reduce discomfort and accelerate healing. Benzocaine, fluocinonide, and hydrogen peroxide are typical components.^[22,23]

5.3. Oral Medications: Due to the possibility of severe adverse effects, oral steroids are often only used as a last resort when topical therapies have failed. However, they may be recommended in this situation.^[24,25]

5.4. Nutritional Supplements: It may be advised to take supplements containing zinc, folic acid, vitamin B-6, and vitamin B-12.^[26,27]

6. BENEFITS OF HERBAL APPROACHES.

6.1. Safety and Side Effects: Have no or less side effects when use for longer period of time hence assure the safety than synthetic drugs.^[28]

6.2. Cost-Effectiveness: Provide a cost-effective option to manage health in increasing population.^[29]

6.3. Environmental and Economic Benefits: Creates agricultural jobs results into enhancement of rural economic development in developing countries. It Also helps to preserves traditional knowledge and sustain environment.^[30]

7. HERBAL DRUGS FOR CANKER SORES:

7.1. Guava (*Psidium guajava*)

Guava belongs to family *Myrtaceae*. It contains several phytochemicals such as Flavonoids, Triterpenoids, Steroids, Carbohydrates, Oils, Lipids, Glycosides, Alkaloids, Tannins and Saponins. It is used for its Antioxidant, Antibacterial activity, Anti-inflammatory activity, Anticancer activity^[31]. Guava leaves has been used as a herbal treatment for oral conditions, including toothaches, sore throats, inflamed gums, and ulcers^[1,32]. Flavonoids present in Guava leaves have the ability to produce cellular antioxidants, inhibit the enzymes cyclooxygenase and xanthine oxidase, which generate

superoxide anion radicals (O_2^-), and inhibit protein kinase.^[33] It reduces the inflammation by inhibiting the prostaglandin synthesis.^[33]

7.2. Aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis*)

Aloe vera known as “the healing plant” belongs to the family *Liliaceae*^[34,35]. The two species of aloe vera commonly cultivated are *Aloe barbadensis* Miller and *Aloe aborescens*^[36]. Aloe vera contains 98-99% water and other 1-2% are active chemical constituent such as anthraquinones, vitamins, choline, folic acid, amino acids, and minerals^[37]. Many research has shown that it has anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antitumor, antiseptic, moisturising, and healing properties. Aloe vera is useful in oral ulcerative diseases such as canker sores due to its anti-inflammatory activity. Application of 2% aloe gel 3 times a day for 10 days on the lesion of canker sores results in the reduction of inflammation zone diameter and wound size^[38].

7.3. Liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)

Liquorice belonging to the family *Leguminosae* is one of the most extensively used medicinal plant^[39]. Liquorice is a perennial herb native to the Mediterranean region, central to southern Russia and Asia Minor to Iran^[42]. Chemical constituent such as glabridin, licoricidin, licorisoflavan A, licochalcone A, and glycyrrhizin present in liquorice have shown beneficial effects in preventing and treating oral diseases^[40]. It is 60 times sweeter than cane sugar^[41]. It possesses antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antioxidant activities^[43]. The extract of liquorice has been used for topical application for inflammatory skin disorders and canker sores^[42]. Liquorice extract helps to relax and soothe the damaged areas resulted by the ulcers because of its anti-inflammatory properties^[1].

7.4. Clove (*Eugenia caryophyllus*)

Clove belongs to the family *Myrtaceae*^[44]. Clove is a native of Indonesia and most valuable spice in the world^[44,45]. The major constituents obtained from the oil extracted from clove contains includes 3-Allyl-6-methoxyphenol i.e. m-Eugenol (69.44%), Eugenol acetate (10.79%), Tyranon (7.78%), Caryophyllene (6.80%), 1,4,7-Cycloundecatriene, 1,5,9,9-tetramethyl. Eugenol is the main key ingredient present in clove about 69.43%^[46]. Clove can be a remedy for such diverse problems as coughs and colds, diarrhea, digestive disorders, diabetes, toothaches, memory loss, erectile dysfunction, and arthritis^[47]. Antimicrobial property of clove helps in the treatment of all oral problems. The application of clove oil treats pain and inflammation.^[46]

7.5. Chamomile (*Chamomilla Recutita*)

Chamomile belongs to the *Asteraceae/Compositae* family and has two common varieties, German Chamomile (*Chamomilla recutita*) and Roman Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*).^[48] It is one of the important medicinal herb native to southern and eastern Europe^[49]. Chemical constituents of Chamomile are flavonoids, coumarins, volatile oils, terpenes, organic acids, polysaccharides, and others.^[50] The Chamomile was even in modern modern era of healthcare^[53]. Chamomile compounds have antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, anti-allergic, anti-spasmodic, anti-bacterial, anti-pyretic, ulcer-protective, anti-fungal, sedative, analgesic and anti-oxidant properties, antiviral, anti-inflammatory and accelerate epithelialization^[51,52]. It is being used to treat many oral diseases like minor canker sores and according to certain research inflammatory mechanism of flavonoids in chamomile plays an essential role in healing ulcers.^[53]

7.6. Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*)

Tulsi is the member of basil family *Lamiaceae* and thought to have originated in north central India and today grows native throughout the eastern world tropics^[54]. Tulsi is sacred plant of Hindu mythology and also called the “Holy Basil”.^[55] The three varieties of tulsi or holy basil are as follows: Rama Tulsi, Krishna Tulsi, Vana Tulsi^[56]. Fresh leaves and stem of tulsi extract yield some phenolic compounds (antioxidants) such as cirsilineol, circimaritin, isothymusin, apigenin and rosmarinic acid,

and appreciable quantities of eugenol and leaves of tulsi contain 0.7% volatile oil comprising about 71% eugenol and 20% methyl eugenol^[57]. Basil has antispasmodic, appetizer, carminative, galactagogue, and stomachic property and it is used for stomach cramps, gastric catarrh, vomiting, intestinal catarrh, constipation, and enteritis^[58]. Its antibacterial potential helps to combat oral pathogen^[59]. It prevents bad breath, plaque, tartar formation, and dental cavities.^[60]

7.7. Papaya (*Carica papaya*)

Papaya is a herbaceous plant belonging to the family *Caricaceae*^[61]. Main chemical components of papaya are papain, chymopapain, pectin, carposide, carpaine, pseudocarpaine, dehydrocarpines, carotenoids, crypto glavine, *cis*-violaxanthin and antheraxanthin^[62]. It helps in the treatment of a various infections such as dengue fever, warts, corns, sinuses, skin inflammation, against diabetic, glandular tumours, blood pressure, digestive disorders, constipation, antibacterial, antifertility, anti-HIV, expel worms, invigorate regenerative organs and it can be used as a nutraceutical also^[63]. Papaya contains enzymes like papain which is a chief constituent of papaya can help with healing and inflammation of canker sores.^[34]

7.8. Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)

Peppermint (Mint family member) is a natural hybrid between spearmint belonging to the family *Lamiaceae*^[64,66]. The peppermint typically has volatile oil containing menthol, menthone, menthyl acetate, menthofuran and 1,8-cineol and peppermint oil also contains small amounts of many additional compounds including limonene, pulegone, caryophyllene and pinene^[65]. It has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antiviral, scolicidal, immunomodulatory, antitumor, neuroprotective, antifatigue and antioxidant activities^[67]. It also has a variety of therapeutic properties and is used in aromatherapy, bath preparations, mouthwashes, toothpastes, and topical preparations because of its inflammatory properties and it also relieves irritation^[68]

8. CONCLUSION

Treating canker sores, or aphthous ulcers, is notably difficult due to their discomfort and tendency to recur. treatments Herbal treatments such as ointments and corticosteroids often come with side effects and provide only limited relief, making the search for alternative methods reasonable. Herbal remedies is increasingly considered either as a complement to or replacement for conventional treatments, offering several potential benefits supported by both historical and contemporary research. Herbal remedies are particularly valued for their anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and healing properties. Herbal treatment not only help manage symptoms but also support the body's natural healing mechanisms. Herbal treatments are more natural and hence have a better safety profile. In comparison with synthetic drugs, herbal medicines not only have fewer side effects, as a result, they are less inclined to cause adverse reactions for those who have these complications, unlike synthetic drugs. Furthermore, herbal remedies are usually cheaper than conventional medications, thus they provide a cheaper alternative in the management of diseases. An individual's response to herbal treatment may vary. The factors, which can be the severity of the canker sore, the health of the individual in general, and sensitive individuals, can determine how the therapy will work. This variability shows the necessity of personalized treatment approaches. Herbal alternatives can be a great adjunct therapy to mainstream medicine in the treatment of canker sores. Their anti-inflammatory, pain-relieving, and healing attributes, tempered by their safety and cheapness, make them an alluring option for the controlled disease. Enhancing research studies and evaluating the herbal remedies' quality and safety will help to utilize them to the maximum. The inclusion of these natural treatments in a comprehensive care plan can be an integral part of the strategy for the prevention, treatment, and management of canker sores, thereby improving the patient's quality of life.

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