

## Burning Mouth Syndrome

### What is Burning Mouth Syndrome (BMS)?

Burning mouth syndrome (BMS) is a painful and complex condition often described as burning, scalding or tingling feeling in the mouth. It is most commonly found in adults over the age of 60 years old and women, especially those who are post-menopausal.

### What are some of the symptoms of BMS?

The main symptom is pain within the mouth that may feel like burning, scalding or tingling. There may also be associated with numbness. Other symptoms include dry mouth or altered taste in the mouth. Usually the tongue is affected but the pain can also be felt in the lips, on the roof of the mouth or other parts of the skin lining inside the mouth.

BMS can last for months or years. Some people feel constant pain every day; in others, pain increases throughout the day. The pain can be occasionally reduced when eating or drinking.

### How is BMS diagnosed?

BMS cannot be visualised and there are no specific tests which make it harder to diagnose - instead it is usually diagnosed from symptoms. Some tests may be performed including:

- Blood tests: to check for deficiencies.
- Oral swab tests
- Allergy tests
- Salivary flow tests
- Biopsy
- Imaging

**Primary BMS** has no identifiable cause; diagnosis is through exclusion. **Secondary BMS** has an identifiable cause including hormonal changes, medications, dry mouth, etc.

### What treatments are available?

There are no specific treatments that work for all people. Sometimes symptoms do resolve following reassurance that there is no serious disease present in the mouth. The sensation can improve when you are feeling less stressed. Your clinician may recommend practicing yoga and mindfulness that can help symptoms improve.

Medications that help control the body's reaction to pain, such as a low dose antidepressant, can help to relieve the sensation of pain. Because BMS is a complex pain disorder, treatment that works for one patient may not work for another.

Treating underlying medical conditions, such as diabetes, allergies, nutritional deficiencies, etc. may improve the symptoms of BMS. If BMS is caused by medications, then your doctor may advise you of more appropriate alternatives.

### What can I try at home?

Symptoms can be relieved by sipping cold beverages, sucking on ice or chewing sugarless gum. Avoiding tobacco, spicy foods, alcoholic beverages, mouthwashes that contain alcohol and acidic products can also help to improve symptoms.

## Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

## Sources of information

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, [nidcr.nih.gov/](http://nidcr.nih.gov/)  
For further information, discuss this leaflet with a member of the Oral & Maxillofacial team.

## Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net).

## Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

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The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:  
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