

Oral leukoplakia

Oral leukoplakia is a clinical term for a white patch or plaque in the mouth that cannot be rubbed off and cannot be attributed to another known disease. It's considered a potentially pre-cancerous lesion, meaning it could develop into oral squamous cell carcinoma over time.

□ Key Features Appearance: White, thickened patches on the tongue, inside of the cheeks, gums, or floor of the mouth.

Texture: May be smooth, wrinkled, or verrucous (wart-like).

Painless in most cases.

Cannot be scraped off (unlike candidiasis).

△ Causes and Risk Factors Tobacco use (smoking or chewing) – major risk factor

Alcohol abuse

Chronic irritation (e.g., from ill-fitting dentures, broken teeth)

Human papillomavirus (HPV) – especially high-risk types

□ Diagnosis Clinical evaluation

Biopsy is essential to rule out:

Dysplasia (abnormal cells)

Carcinoma in situ

Invasive carcinoma

□ Management Eliminate risk factors (stop smoking, improve oral hygiene)

Regular monitoring with repeat biopsies if necessary

Surgical removal (excision, laser ablation, or cryotherapy) if:

There's moderate/severe dysplasia

The lesion is persistent or enlarging

□ Malignant Transformation Transformation rates vary (~1–20%) depending on:

Degree of dysplasia

Size and location (tongue and floor of mouth have higher risk)

Duration and appearance (non-homogeneous types are riskier)

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