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Nicotine Stomatitis

Also known as: Smoker's Keratosis & Smoker's Palate

What is Nicotine Stomatitis?

- Nicotine stomatitis is a white lesion on the posterior hard palate and the anterior soft palate.
- It consists of papules with an opaque white surface and a red dot in the center.
- It is predominantly detected in pipe smokers and reverse cigarette smokers.
- Nicotine stomatitis is less common with cigarette or cigar smoking and rarely with drinking extremely hot liquids.

What does Nicotine Stomatitis look like?



- The whiteness represents hyperkeratosis.
- The white color of palate is caused by excess production of keratin from the epithelial cells lining the inside of the mouth.
- The red dot is the dilated opening of an inflamed salivary gland duct.

What Causes Nicotine Stomatitis?

- The name, nicotine stomatitis, is a misleading term.
 - The lesion is not caused by nicotine but by the intense heat flow of smoke from tobacco products on the mucosa.
- Studies have shown that the combination of smoking and heat from hot beverages can predict the development of nicotine stomatitis.

Exposed vs. Unexposed Mucosa



- Notice the gingival-palatal areas where a partial denture protects the mucosa from the heat and smoke.

When Does Nicotine Stomatitis Occur?

- Nicotine stomatitis is developed over a period of time.
- The heat produced from the pipe act as an irritant, which modify the inner lining of the palate to a white or gray color.
- If the smoking continues at this point, the white color on the palate may become thickened and form the legions of nicotine stomatitis.

Symptoms & Treatment

- There are usually no symptoms for nicotine stomatitis.
- Nicotine stomatitis is found on routine examination of the mouth.
- The only treatment for nicotine stomatitis is to stop pipe-smoking and reversible smoking.
- The lesion will return to normal appearance after 1-2 weeks following the cessation of smoking.
- Any persistent white area that does not returned to normal after a month must be biopsied for diagnosis.

Role of Dental Team on Hygiene Care

- Although it does not develop into cancer, the dental team should:
 - Review patient's social history (i.e., history of smoking);
 - Examine patient's oral cavity; and
 - Encourage patients to quit smoking.

References

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