

LIP LICKERS DERMATITIS

What is it?

Children with lip lickers dermatitis have moist or dry cracked lips and irritated skin around the mouth. It is particularly common in children with atopic dermatitis, although it may occur in children without atopic dermatitis. Lip lickers dermatitis is sometimes due to allergy to food or toothpaste coming into direct contact with the skin. It can become infected and crusted.



What causes it?

Lip lickers dermatitis is caused by the habits of lip licking, thumb sucking, dribbling or rubbing of the skin around the mouth. It is more common in children who mouth breathe, particularly those with frequently stuffy noses due to hayfever or infections such as the common cold. Irritation from food (especially acidic food such as oranges) can make it worse.

How is it treated?

Lip lickers dermatitis is a self-limiting and harmless condition. Treatment involves frequent use of a protective barrier and moisturiser such as **petroleum jelly (Vaseline)** on and around the lips. This may need to be applied hourly until the dermatitis settles.

The child should be encouraged to stop licking their lips and to avoid getting toothpaste or food on the skin around the mouth.

The dermatitis should settle in a few weeks. If it persists, then there may be another cause for the dermatitis, and medical advice should be sought. Low strength **cortisone ointments** may be used to reduce inflammation.