

weight decline persists, the nurse should investigate the family situation to determine whether any of these variables are contributing to the problem.

Mucosal Ulceration

One of the most distressing side effects of several chemotherapy drugs is gastrointestinal mucosal cell damage, which results in ulcers anywhere along the alimentary tract. Oral ulcers (stomatitis) are red, eroded, painful areas in the mouth or pharynx. Similar lesions may extend along the esophagus and occur in the rectal area. They greatly compound anorexia because eating is extremely uncomfortable.

Nursing Alert

Viscous lidocaine is not recommended for young children. If applied to the pharynx, it may depress the gag reflex, increasing the risk of aspiration. Seizures have also been associated with the use of oral viscous lidocaine, most likely as a result of the rapid absorption into the bloodstream via the oral lesions ([Lutwak, Howland, Gambetta, et al, 2013](#)).

Some interventions that are helpful when oral ulcers develop are feeding a bland, moist, soft diet; using a soft sponge toothbrush (Toothette) instead of a toothbrush; frequently rinsing the mouth with chlorhexidine mouthwash or sodium bicarbonate and salt mouth rinses (using a solution of 1 tsp of baking soda and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of table salt in 1 quart of water); using sucralfate; and administering local anesthetics without alcohol, such as a solution of diphenhydramine and Maalox (aluminum and magnesium hydroxide) ([Miller, Donald, and Hagemann, 2012](#)). Although local anesthetics are effective in temporarily relieving the pain, many children dislike the taste and numb feeling they produce.

Nursing Alert

Avoid agents such as lemon glycerin swabs and hydrogen peroxide because of the drying effects on the mucosa. In addition, lemon may be very irritating, especially on eroded tissue.