CASE 38-3

An 18-year-old female presents with painful lesions on the tongue (A) and lower lip (B). She reports frequent episodes of similar lesions that last a week to 10 days. The one most likely diagnosis is

(A) Recurrent intraoral herpes
(B) Trauma-associated ulcerations
(C) Cicatricial pemphigoid
(D) Recurrent aphthous stomatitis
(E) Herpes zoster
The correct answer is (D), recurrent aphthous stomatitis.

Recurrent aphthous stomatitis presents as recurring painful episodes of ulcers affecting most frequently the non-masticatory mucosa. They are not preceded by vesicles and they last usually 7 to 14 days depending on the size. Recurrent intraoral herpes is characterized by vesicles that ulcerate. It is usually seen on the masticatory mucosa, that is palate and gingiva. Cicatricial pemphigoid is a vesiculobullous disease, but does not present with intermittent, recurring episodes of ulcers that heal. Lesions of herpes zoster, when occurring in the mouth or face, have a unilateral distribution.