

Did you know that your dentist screens you for mouth cancer at every visit?

Oral cancers can be deadly diseases. Every year in the US, roughly 45,000 new cases of mouth cancer and throat cancer are diagnosed, and roughly 13% of people die within the same year they are diagnosed.

Treatment is more successful with oral cancers that are found early. Essentially, the biggest cure for oral cancer is early diagnosis. Your dentist checks for these cancers every time you visit, so this is one more reason to see your dentist regularly.

This brochure will tell you some ways to lower your risk for mouth and throat cancer. By watching for the signs and symptoms listed here, you are more likely to find the cancer earlier if you have it.

ADA Healthy Smile Tips

- Brush your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste
- Clean between your teeth twice daily
- Eat a healthy diet and limit snacks
- Visit your dentist regularly



For more information about taking care of your teeth and gums, visit Mouth-Healthy.org, the ADA's website just for patients.

Some Facts about Mouth and Throat Cancer



What are the signs and symptoms?

Below is a list of mouth and throat cancer symptoms. Check your mouth in the mirror each week when you brush and floss. If there are any changes in your mouth and neck, or if you notice any of these signs and symptoms, contact your dentist.

Signs and Symptoms of Oral Cancer

Mouth sore that does not heal

Mouth sore that bleeds spontaneously

Velvety white, red, or speckled (red and white) patch in the mouth that is persistent

Hard, raised lesion (lump), crusts, eroded areas on the lips, gums, or other areas inside the mouth

Unexplained bleeding in the mouth

Persistent pain in the mouth

Difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking, or moving the tongue



Additional signs and symptoms of throat cancer include

- A lump or growth in the throat or neck
- Cough or sore throat that doesn't go away
- Ear ache
- Trouble with swallowing
- Hoarseness or changes in the voice

Am I at risk for oral cancer?

Anyone can get oral cancer. Below is more information about factors that can affect your chance of getting mouth or throat cancer.

- Infection with HPV is associated with increased risk of developing oral cancer. HPV is very common and most people are not even aware that they have been infected.
- Tobacco associated risk, which includes chewing tobacco or smoking cigarettes, cigars, or pipes, is affected by the amount of tobacco you use and the length of time you've been doing it. When you quit using tobacco, your risk of oral cancer continues to go down. In 10 years of being tobacco free, your risk is about the same as someone who never smoked and chewed
- People who use tobacco products and drink alcohol have a greater chance of developing oral cancer than if they did one or the other.
- Spending long periods of time in the sun increases the risk of developing lip cancer.
- Eating too few fruits and vegetables can increase the risk of oral cancer
- The risk of mouth and throat cancer increases with age. Though not always the case, it can occur in people greater than 40 years.

Self-Examination Steps for Oral Cancer Screening

1. If possible, have gauze, a tongue depressor, and a flashlight available
2. Wash your hands
3. Stand in front of a mirror
4. Examine your lips for white or red spots, bumps, and lumps (small bumps typically are present on the lower lip; these are minor salivary glands)
5. Examine your gums for white or red spots, bumps, and lumps
6. Tilt your head back and look at and feel the roof of your mouth
7. Pull your cheeks out and examine their insides
8. Pull your tongue out (using gauze, take hold of the front of the tongue) and pull to each side, examining entire tongue (e.g., top, bottom, sides)
9. Examine the back of your throat

How can I lower my risk for mouth and throat cancer?

- As part of your oral hygiene routine, watch for changes in the soft tissues of your mouth
- Avoid all tobacco products, including cigarettes and chewing tobacco
- Avoid heavy alcohol use
- Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables
- Visit your dentist for regular oral cancer screenings

How can your dentist help?

During a dental exam, your dentist will check your face, neck and mouth for lumps, red or white patches, and sore areas that do not heal. Your dentist for oral cancer visually, manually, with special screening tools, or with a combination of these methods.

Be sure to tell your dentist if you notice any changes in your mouth or neck. If signs of cancer are found early, treatment will be more successful.

Be aware of changes in your mouth and throat. If you have any concerns about mouth and throat cancer, talk with your dentist. It may help save your life.

**Early
detection
saves
lives!**