

Oral Cancer

Oral cancer affects nearly 30,000 people a year, and more than 7,000 people die of the disease annually. It is commonly diagnosed late, so it is important to maintain good oral health and visit your dentist regularly for screenings.

PREVENTION

- Avoid tobacco in any form.
- Avoid excessive alcohol use, as well as the combination of alcohol and tobacco.
- Avoid being outdoors during the middle of the day when the sun's rays are strongest.
- Use lip balms containing sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher to protect against sunlight.
- Increase dietary intake of fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods.
- Minimize intake of red meats, especially those high in fat or those that are processed.
- Lead a healthy lifestyle that includes getting regular exercise.
- Have an annual oral cancer screening by your dentist or health care professional.

AT RISK

- People who chew or smoke tobacco, or people who abuse alcohol
- Men and women age 40 or older
- African-American men are at greater risk
- People who are exposed to sunlight for long periods of time.
- People whose diets are low in fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- Women with human papillomavirus (HPV)
- People with Vitamin A deficiencies

SYMPTOMS

- A white or red lesion on the gum, tongue or mouth lining
- A lump or mass, which can be felt inside the mouth or neck
- Pain or difficulty chewing, swallowing or speaking, or hoarseness lasting a long time
- Numbness or pain in any area of the mouth that doesn't go away
- Swelling of the jaw or loosening of the teeth

EARLY DETECTION

- Have regular dental checkups that include an examination of the entire mouth.
- Ask your health care professional to examine your mouth as part of a routine checkup.
- Conduct a monthly self-examination by looking in a mirror.

TREATMENT

Treatment options vary, depending on age, stage of the cancer and patient's medical condition.

- Surgery and radiation therapy are standard forms of treatment.
- Chemotherapy may also be used in addition to surgery and/or radiation for some patients with later stages of the disease.