



Oral Cancer 2009 Fact Sheet

Introduction

Oral cancer will be diagnosed in an estimated 35,720 people in 2009, and an estimated 7,600 people will die of the disease. Men are diagnosed with oral cancer more than twice as often as women. Because some oral pre-cancers and cancers can be found early, and one in four people diagnosed do not exhibit the known high-risk factors associated with the disease, it is important to visit your dentist regularly for screenings.

At Risk

- People who chew or smoke tobacco or who drink alcohol to excess or do both
- People who are exposed to sunlight for long periods of time.
- People who do not eat many fruits or vegetables.
- People with human papillomavirus (HPV).
- People with suppressed immune systems.

Risk Reduction and Early Detection

- Do not use tobacco in any form.
- Avoid excessive alcohol use, and do not combine alcohol with tobacco.
- Avoid being outdoors during the middle of the day when the sunlight is strongest.
- Use lip balm containing sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher to protect against sun damage to the lips.
- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Have an annual oral cancer screening by your dentist or health care professional.
- Conduct a self-examination once a month by looking in a mirror.

Symptoms

- A white or red lesion on the lips, 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
- Hoarseness lasting a long time
- In any area of the mouth, numbness or pain that doesn't go away
- Swelling of the jaw or loosening of the teeth
- Bleeding in the mouth

Treatment

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