

# ORAL CANCER

Oral cancer is more common than most people realize. An estimated 30,000 Americans are diagnosed annually with oral cancer, which includes cancers of the mouth and pharynx (a part of the throat). It is the 6th most common cancer in men and the 14th most common cancer in women. It most often occurs in people over the age of 40.

Oral cancer can spread quickly. On average, only half the people diagnosed with the disease will survive more than 5 years. Over 8,000 Americans die of oral cancer each year.

Fortunately, most oral cancer is preventable. There are simple life style changes that you can make to lower your risk.

1. 75% of oral cancers are related to tobacco or alcohol use. Using both tobacco and alcohol puts you at much greater risk than using either substance alone. To decrease your risk of oral cancer, do not use any tobacco products and drink alcohol only in moderation.
2. Exposure to sunlight is a risk factor for lip cancer. Use lip balm that contains sunscreen.
3. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables as part of a low-fat, high-fiber diet to help reduce cancer risk.

Early detection is important for treatment success. An oral cancer examination is quick and painless, and can be part of your regular dental check-up. During the examination, your dentist or dental hygienist will check your face, neck, lips, and entire mouth.

In between your routine appointments, see your dentist or physician if any of the following symptoms lasts for more than two weeks:

- A sore, irritation, lump or thick patch in your mouth, lip, or throat

- A white or red patch in your mouth
- A feeling that something is caught in your throat
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Difficulty moving your jaw or tongue
- Numbness in your tongue or other areas of your mouth
- Swelling of your jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- Pain in one ear without hearing loss

Talk to your dentist about the latest research, prevention measures and treatment options for oral cancer.

