

Oral and Oropharyngeal (Throat) Cancer

Oral and oropharyngeal cancer includes the following:

- lips
- tongue
- gums
- lining inside the lips and cheeks
- floor of the mouth
- roof of the mouth
- the area behind the wisdom teeth or last molar
- the throat

Most oral cancers are located on the sides of the tongue, floor of the mouth and lips.

Incidence and Survival Rates

- *Oral cancer is responsible for more than 4,600 new cases and 1,234 deaths each year.
- The five-year survival rate of oral cancer is low, just below 63%.
- Early detection sharply increases the survival rate.

*Canadian Cancer Statistics 2017

Key Risk Factors

- Tobacco and alcohol use show increased risk factors for developing pre-cancerous conditions of the mouth. Smoking or chewing tobacco, when combined with heavy alcohol consumption, increases your risk of getting oral cancer. Quitting tobacco and alcohol significantly lowers the risk, even after years of use.
- Excessive sun exposure to the lips.
- Poor oral health.
- Age – oral cancer is more common in people over 45.
- Gender – more men than women develop oral cancer.
- HPV – (Human Papilloma Virus) creates risk for throat cancer, ages 40-59 years.
- Diet low in fruits and vegetables. (These contain carotenoids which decrease risk of oral cancer.)

Signs and Symptoms

If you have any of the following signs or symptoms see your dentist or physician as soon as possible:

- a sore on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal in two weeks.
- a lump on the lip, in the mouth or in the throat.
- a white or red patch on the gums, tongue or lining of the mouth.
- unusual bleeding, pain or numbness in the mouth.
- a persistent sore throat or a feeling that you constantly need to clear your throat.
- difficulty or pain with chewing or swallowing.
- swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable.
- a change in your voice.
- pain in your ear that doesn't go away.

Your best defense against oral cancer is prevention and early detection.

- Oral cancer is one of the easiest of all cancers to detect. Early signs can often be seen.
- Re-fit poorly fitting dentures to avoid irritation against tongue.
- Use lip balm with SPF to protect lips when outdoors.
- Avoid excessive alcohol use.
- Do not use tobacco products.
- Vaccinate against HPV.
- Ask for an oral cancer screening as a part of your regular check-up. It is simple, painless and takes just a few minutes.
- If you have a concern, see your dentist or physician. Don't delay!

Best Protection Against Oral Cancer is Self Examination

There are seven easy steps to oral self-examination. Monthly oral self-examination increase your chance of discovering the early signs of oral disease.



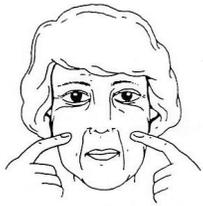
1. Head and Neck

Any lumps, bumps or swellings that are only on one side of your face should be looked at by your physician or dentist.



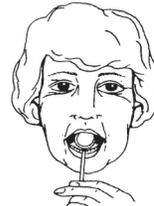
5. Cheek

Inside the cheek look for red, white, or colored patches. Next feel for lumps or tenderness, gently roll your cheek between your index finger and thumb.



2. Face

Look at the skin on your face. If moles are present, are there any changes in the size, shape or color? Look for new growths or sores that do not heal in 2 weeks.



6. Roof of the Mouth

Use a mouth mirror or tilt your head back when looking to see if there are any lumps, sores, or colored patches on the roof of your mouth.



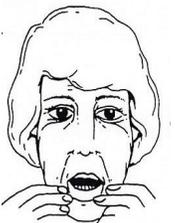
3. Neck

Press along the sides and front of the neck. Do you feel any tenderness or lumps there?



7. Floor of the Mouth and Tongue

Stick out your tongue, look at the top surface. Using a piece of gauze or tissue, gently pull your tongue forward to view one side, then the other.



4. Lips

Pull your lower lip down and look at the inside for any sores or color changes.



Next, use the thumb and index finger to feel the lip for lumps, bumps, or changes in texture. Repeat this on your upper lip.

**For more information,
contact an oral health
professional at your local
public health office.**

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