

# ORAL CANCER EARLY DETECTION

*REDUCE Your RISK...*

*...spot the EARLY SIGNS*

Oral cancer is often not noticed in its early stages because it can develop without pain or symptoms. If the cancer is detected early, and before it has spread to other tissues, the 5-year survival rate is almost 90%.

## DID YOU KNOW

There are three times as many cases of oral cancer as compared to cervical cancer, and three times as many oral cancer deaths each year.

Oral cancer can be transmitted between partners through oral sex or sexual intercourse. The human papillomavirus (HPV) is the culprit, and HPV infection is the fastest growing sexually transmitted infection.

The new patient profile is a younger, sexually active male or female who often does not smoke or have any of the typical risk factors. HPV is the cause of over 70% of oral cancer at the back of the throat, base of the tongue, and tonsillar areas.

## THE GOOD NEWS

There are a number of ways to reduce your risk. Here are a few suggestions:

- Eliminate use of tobacco products and avoid excessive alcohol consumption
- Avoid combining tobacco and alcohol use
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Avoid unprotected exposure to the sun
- Practice safe sex and limit number of sexual partners to reduce risk of HPV infection
- Consider the HPV vaccination ideally before becoming sexually active
- Have regular dental hygiene visits including oral cancer screenings
- Perform regular oral self-examination

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- A red or white patch in the mouth
- A lump or thickening of tissue in the mouth, neck or face
- Sore in the mouth, including under a denture or an appliance, which bleeds easily or does not heal within 14 days
- Numbness in the mouth or face
- Persistent earache in only one ear
- Continuous sore throat or persistent infection that lasts for a long time or recurs
- Hoarseness or change in speech
- Pain or difficulty swallowing, speaking, chewing or moving the jaw or tongue
- Wart-like masses inside the mouth
- A lump in the throat or feeling that something is caught in the throat

## 5 EASY STEPS TO GOOD ORAL HEALTH

It takes just a few minutes a day to help ensure good oral health. Here are five things that you can do to enjoy healthy gums and teeth:

### 1. Brush your teeth daily

Use a power or manual toothbrush with soft bristles.

### 2. Floss your teeth daily

Use floss on its own or in a holder, or a special brush to clean between your teeth.

### 3. Rinse using an antiseptic mouthwash

Rinsing will help to reduce the amount of bacteria.

### 4. Make healthy food choices

Meals and snacks high in nutrients and low in sugar are good for your overall health and your oral health.

### 5. Get regular dental hygiene care

Why not make an appointment today with your dental hygienist?



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# A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO SELF-EXAMINATION



- A** Wash your hands. In front of a mirror, examine your face and neck. Examine the skin on your face and along your hairline for moles, growths, sores or any change in colour or size of an existing mole.
- B** Check for growths or change in skin texture, swelling or lumps that occur only on one side of your face or neck. Check under your chin as well.
- C** Remove any oral appliances or dentures to examine the inside of your mouth.

Lift your upper lip, examining the gums and inside of the lip for any colour change or sore. Feel along the lip for lumps or changes in the tissue texture. Repeat for the lower lip.

- D** Examine the inside of your cheeks for red or white patches. Check the tissue for swelling, hardness or tenderness.

- E** Lift your tongue so that it touches the roof of your mouth. Examine the floor of your mouth and the underside of your tongue. Feel for swelling or hardness and look for colour or texture changes.
- F** Stick your tongue straight out, move it side to side, and note any limitation in movement. Examine the surface as far back as you can see for any swelling or colour changes. Feel the sides of the tongue for lumps or hard spots and any colour or texture changes.
- G** Open your mouth as wide as possible to see any colour or texture change on the roof of your mouth. Check the surface for lumps or swelling.

With your mouth still open, take a deep breath in and say “aah.” Examine your throat for signs of texture or colour change. This area may appear quite red simply due to allergies or even mouth breathing. Pay attention to persistent or recurrent throat infections.

*If you do find something that does not appear normal, does not have a known cause, and does not heal or go away in 14 days, visit your dental hygienist for an oral cancer examination.*



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