

## Oral Cancer

### What is oral cancer?

Oral cancer involves abnormal malignant tissue growth in the mouth. Approximately three to five percent of all cancers occur in the mouth, but they have a high mortality rate if not detected early. The five-year survival rate is low, just below 50 percent. However, early detection results in survival rate increasing sharply to 80 percent. Any lumps or sores in the mouth lasting more than two weeks need to be reported to your dentist or doctor.

### Did you know that oral cancer:

- affects men four times more often than women?
- occurs most often in adults over 40 years old?
- may not be painful?

### The warning signs are:

- white or red patches on tongue, gums, or lining of the mouth,
- a sore on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal within two weeks,
- lumps in the mouth, throat, or on the lip,
- persistent sore throat,
- pain when chewing or swallowing, and
- unusual bleeding, pain, or numbness in the mouth.

### You are at risk if you:

- smoke or chew tobacco,
- drink two or more alcoholic beverages a day,
- have poor oral hygiene,
- have chronic irritation of tissues due to ill fitting dentures or fillings, and
- are overexposed to the sun.

### You can prevent it by:

- avoiding tobacco products including chewing tobacco,
- avoiding more than two alcoholic beverages a day,
- using sun protection on your lips, and
- using alcohol-free mouthwash.

### What can you do?

Check your mouth, lips, tongue, and cheeks regularly for early detection of warning signs. Early intervention is the key to oral health. Don't ignore the warning signs. Stay alert to changes that occur in your mouth. Be sure to visit a dentist every 6 to 12 months.

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