

Oral Cancer

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 30,000 Americans are diagnosed with mouth and throat cancers each year. Oral cancer can affect any one of the oral cavities including the lips, gum tissues, cheek lining, tongue and the hard or soft palate.

As with many forms of cancer, early detection can improve the chances of successful treatment. By taking a few minutes to examine your lips, gums, cheek lining and tongue, you're taking an active role in detecting signs of oral cancer. Alert your dental professional immediately if you notice any signs suggestive of oral cancer during this self-exam, including:

- A sore on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal, bleeds easily, or increases in size
- A lump on the lip, mouth, or throat
- Numbness or pain in the mouth, lips, or difficulty moving the jaw or tongue
- A white or red patch or dark spot on the gums, tongue, or lining of the mouth.
- Unusual bleeding, pain, or numbness in the mouth
- A sore throat that does not go away, or a feeling that something is caught in the throat
- Difficulty or pain with chewing or swallowing
- Swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become unfavorable
- Change in the voice
- Pain in the ear
- Change in the way teeth fit together or loosening of the teeth.

Q: Is it possible to minimize the risk of developing oral cancer?

A: The good news is YES! Avoid smoking cigarettes, cigars or pipes; chewing tobacco; or dipping snuff. Chronic or heavy use of alcohol also increases risk of oral cancer, even for people who do not use tobacco. Regular visits to your dental professional can increase the chance that oral cancer will be detected in the early stages and treated effectively.

The American Academy of Periodontology