

What You Should Know About Oral Cancer



Every hour, one person on average dies of oral or pharyngeal cancer in the United States.¹ Although the survival rates have increased since the 1960s, they are still relatively low — only 63% of people diagnosed with the disease are expected to survive for at least five years. Protect yourself and your family by knowing what to look out for.

Review your risk factors

- Using tobacco (including cigarettes, pipes, cigars and smoke-free chewing tobacco)
- Drinking alcohol
- Human papilloma virus (HPV)
- Exposure to the sun
- Personal history of the disease
- Diet low in fruits and vegetables
- Chewing the Betel nut

Groups at risk

- **Men.** Oral cancer affects men at twice the rate of women.
- **African Americans.** Black men face the highest risk of developing the disease² and die at a higher rate than their white counterparts.³
- **Adults over 40.** Risk of oral cancer increases with age.

¹ "SEER Stat Fact Sheets: Oral Cavity and Pharynx Cancer." National Cancer Institute. <http://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/oralcav.html>

² Are You At Risk for Oral Cancer? What African American Men Need to Know. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/oralhealth/Topics/OralCancer/AfricanAmericanMen/oral_exam_brochure.htm

³ Oral Cancer 5-Year Survival Rates by Race, Gender, and Stage of Diagnosis. National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. <http://nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/FindDataByTopic/OralCancer/OralCancer5YearSurvivalRates.htm>

Types

Oral cancers may attack different parts of the mouth, including:

- Lips
- Floor or roof of the mouth
- Tongue
- Inside the cheeks
- Gums

Treatment options

Several treatment options are available, depending on the size and location of the tumor and extent of the disease:

- **Surgery:** Removes the cancerous tumors from the oral cavity and lymph nodes.
- **Radiation:** Uses high-energy waves (like x-rays) to kill cancer cells and prevent spread of the disease. May also be used to reduce a tumor before surgery.
- **Chemotherapy:** Uses chemicals to kill cancer cells and prevent spread of the disease. May be used along with radiation to increase effectiveness, or after surgery to destroy any cancer cells left behind.

Look for warning signs

- A sore that lasts longer than two weeks
- Swelling, growth or lumps in or near your mouth or neck
- White or red patches on your lips or in your mouth
- Bleeding from your mouth or throat
- Persistent hoarseness or difficulty swallowing

See your dentist if you experience any of these symptoms.



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