



April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month

Oral cancer affects nearly 50,000 Americans each year, with risks including tobacco, alcohol, HPV, and sun exposure. Being aware of warning signs—such as persistent sores, lumps, patches, or difficulty chewing or swallowing—can make a meaningful difference. With regular self-checks and dental visits, early detection greatly improves outcomes and offers strong hope for successful treatment.

Please see the attached PDF fact sheet from American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons or visit myoms.org

Thank you.

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Oral Cancer Fact Sheet

Prevalence

- An estimated 49,750 new cases of oral cancer will be diagnosed each year.
- Oral cancer will claim 9,750 lives annually.
- On average, 57 percent of those with the disease will survive more than five years.
- Oral cancer affects almost twice as many men as women.

Risk Factors

- An estimated 25 percent of oral cancer patients have no known risk factors.
- Alcohol and tobacco remain the greatest risk factors (and using them in combination increases the risk 15 times over the use of one or the other).
- Infection with the sexually transmitted HPV16 virus has been linked to a subset of oral cancers.
- Historically, oral cancer has been a disease of those ages 40+, but its incidence in those under 40 is climbing.
- Prolonged sun or tanning bed exposure is a risk factor for lip cancer.

Possible Signs and Symptoms

While you may have no symptoms at all, you should see your oral and maxillofacial surgeon or dentist if you experience any of the following:

- A sore on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal.
- A lump or thickening on the lips or gums or in the mouth.
- A white or red patch on the gums, tongue, tonsils or lining of the mouth.
- Bleeding, pain or numbness in the lip or mouth.
- Change in voice.
- Loose teeth or dentures that no longer fit well.
- Trouble chewing or swallowing or moving the tongue or jaw.
- Swelling of the jaw.
- Sore throat or feeling that something is caught in the throat.

Early Detection

- Performing a self-examination regularly increases the chance of identifying changes or new growths early.
- If you have risk factors, also see your oral and maxillofacial surgeon or dentist for an oral examination at least annually.
- The earlier the cancer is detected, the easier the treatment and the greater the chance of a cure.

Sources: Oral Cancer Foundation, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health