

Oral cancer complications



CANCER is defined as the uncontrollable growth of cells that invade and cause damage to surrounding tissue.

Oral cancer appears as a growth or sore in the mouth that does not go away.

Oral cancer, which includes cancers of the lips, tongue, cheeks, floor of the mouth, hard and soft palate, sinuses, and pharynx (throat), can be life threatening if not diagnosed and treated early.

What are the Symptoms of Oral Cancer?

The most common symptoms of oral cancer include:

Swellings/thickenings, lumps or bumps, rough spots/crusts/or eroded areas on the lips, gums, or other areas inside the mouth

The development of velvety white, red, or speckled (white and red) patches in the mouth.

Unexplained bleeding in the mouth.

Unexplained numbness, loss of feeling, or pain/tenderness in any area of the face, mouth, or neck

Persistent sores on the face, neck, or mouth that bleed easily and do not heal within 2 weeks.

A soreness or feeling that something is caught in the back of the throat.

Difficulty chewing or swallowing, speaking, or moving the jaw or tongue.

Hoarseness, chronic sore throat, or change in voice

Ear pain.

A change in the way your teeth or dentures fit together.

Dramatic weight loss.

If you notice any of these changes, contact your dentist or health care professional immediately.

Who Gets Oral Cancer?

Men face twice the risk of developing oral cancer as women, and men who are over age 50 face the greatest risk.

Risk factors for the development of oral cancer include:

Smoking. Cigarette, cigar,

or pipe smokers are six times more likely than nonsmokers to develop oral cancers.

Smokeless tobacco users. Users of dip, snuff, or chewing tobacco products are 50 times more likely to develop cancers of the cheek, gums, and lining of the lips.

Excessive consumption of alcohol. Oral cancers are about six times more common in drinkers than in nondrinkers.

Family history of cancer.

Excessive sun exposure, especially at a young age.

It is important to note that over 25 per cent of all oral cancers occur in people who do not smoke and who only drink alcohol occasionally.

What is the outlook for people with Oral Cancer?

The overall 1-year survival rate for patients with all stages of oral cavity and pharynx cancers is 81 per cent. The 5- and 10-year survival rates are 56 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively.

How is oral cancer diagnosed?

As part of your routine dental exam, your dentist will conduct an oral cancer screening exam. More specifically, your dentist will feel for any lumps or irregular tissue changes in your neck, head, face, and oral cavity. When examining your mouth, your dentist will look for any sores or discolored tissue as well as check for any signs and symptoms mentioned above.

Your dentist may perform an oral brush biopsy if he or she sees tissue in your mouth that looks suspicious.

This test is painless and involves taking a small sample of the tissue and analyzing it for abnormal cells.

Alternatively, if the tissue looks more suspicious, your dentist may recommend a scalpel biopsy. This procedure usually requires local anesthesia and may be performed by your dentist or a specialist. These tests are necessary to detect oral cancer early, before it has had a chance to progress and spread.