

ORAL CANCER



Did you know?

Mouth and oral cancer is the
13th most common cancer worldwide.

WHAT IS ORAL CANCER?

Oral cancer can develop in different parts of the mouth, including the lips, tongue, gums, cheeks, back of the mouth and throat. It occurs when abnormal cells grow out of control and damage surrounding tissues.

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

Discomfort is the most common initial symptom.
Other symptoms of oral cancer include:

- ➔ **Changes to the mouth or lips:** lumps, bumps, swellings, thickened areas, rough spots, crusted or eroded areas on the lips, gums, or other areas inside the mouth.
- ➔ **Unusual patches:** white, red or speckled (red and white) patches in the mouth.
- ➔ **Unexplained bleeding** in the mouth.
- ➔ **Unexplained numbness, pain or tenderness** in the face, mouth or neck.
- ➔ **Persistent sores** on the face, neck or mouth that do not heal within two weeks.
- ➔ **Throat discomfort:** soreness or a feeling that something is caught in the back of the throat.
- ➔ **Difficulty with everyday functions:** chewing, swallowing, speaking, or moving the jaw or tongue.
- ➔ **Voice changes:** hoarseness or other changes in the voice.
- ➔ **Ear pain.**
- ➔ **Unexplained weight loss.**
- ➔ **Changes to your bite:** changes in the way your teeth or dentures fit together.

WHY EARLY ACTION MATTERS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

Early detection is crucial because diagnosing oral cancer early improves treatment outcomes.



Be aware of the signs and symptoms of oral cancer. If you notice any unusual change in your mouth, especially one that does not heal or disappear within two weeks, see a dentist or doctor as soon as possible.



Avoid risk factors. Tobacco use, alcohol consumption, UV exposure, and areca nut and betel quid chewing (with or without added tobacco) are among the leading causes of oral cancer. The risk is greater for people who both smoke and drink.



Ask your dentist to check for signs of oral cancer during routine dental visits.



Reduce your risk of human papillomavirus (HPV) infection. In North America and Europe, HPV infections are responsible for a growing percentage of oral cancers among young people.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Read the **Risk factors for oral diseases** fact sheet to learn more about the main risk factors and the steps you can take to protect your mouth and your body.



**World Oral
Health Day**
20 March



EVERYONE,
EVERYWHERE
IS INVITED
TO JOIN US

#GENERATIONSMILE
#WOHD27

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