



## Oral Cancer Fact Sheet

### Introduction

Oral cancer is cancer of the mouth or throat. This year, an estimated 41,380 people will be diagnosed with oral cancer and nearly 8,000 will die of the disease. Oral cancer is twice as common in men as in women. Not using tobacco and not drinking alcohol in excess can prevent most oral cancer. However, one in four people diagnosed with oral cancer has no risk factors. It's important to see your dentist regularly for screenings.

### At Risk

- People who chew or smoke tobacco
- People who drink alcohol in excess
- People who drink a lot of alcohol and use tobacco
- People who are exposed to sunlight for long periods of time
- People with a certain type of human papillomavirus (HPV)
- People whose immune systems are suppressed by certain medications
- People with a skin disease called lichen planus, graft-versus-host disease (GVHD), or certain inherited conditions of the blood

### Risk Reduction and Early Detection

- **Don't use tobacco in any form. If you use tobacco, quit.**
- **Limit alcohol to no more than one drink a day if you're a woman or two drinks a day if you're a man.**
- **Stay out of the sun, especially between 10 am and 4 pm when sunlight is strongest.**
- **Always use lip balm with SPF 30 or higher.**
- **Eat lots of fruits and vegetables.**
- **Have an oral cancer screening by your dentist at your regular check-up.**
- **Look at your mouth in a mirror once a month. If you see something different, tell your dentist.**

### Symptoms

- White or red patches on lips, gum, tongue or mouth lining
- A lump which can be felt inside the mouth or on the neck
- Pain or difficulty chewing, swallowing or speaking
- Hoarseness lasting a long time
- Numbness or pain in any area of the mouth that doesn't go away
- Swelling of the jaw
- Loosening of teeth
- Difficulty wearing dentures
- Bleeding in the mouth
- A sore that doesn't go away on the lips or in the mouth
- An earache that doesn't go away

If you have any of these symptoms, see your dentist right away

### Treatment

- Surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and newer targeted therapies may be used alone or in combination.

Updated 04/2013  
For more information about oral cancer, visit  
[www.PreventCancer.org](http://www.PreventCancer.org)

*This fact sheet features information from the following sources:  
American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures, 2013.  
American Cancer Society, Detailed Guide to Oral and Oropharyngeal Cancer.  
<http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/OralCavityandOropharyngealCancer/DetailedGuide/index>.*

**Stop Cancer Before It Starts!**

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*American Institute of Cancer Research (AICR) and World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) Expert Report. Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective. <http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/>. National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health. What You Need to Know About Oral Cancer. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/wyntk/oral>.*

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