

## What is Oral Cancer?

Oral cancer refers to all cancers of the oral cavity which include the following:

- Lips
- Tongue
- Teeth
- Gums (gingiva)
- Lining inside the lips and cheeks (Labial mucosa and buccal mucosa)
- Floor of the mouth
- Roof of the mouth (palate)
- The area behind the wisdom teeth

Most oral cancers are located on the sides of the tongue, floor of the mouth and lips.

Oral cancer starts in the cells of the mouth. Normally these cells are quite resistant to damage, but repeated injury from smoking, other tobacco use, alcohol or even friction may cause sores or painful areas where cancer can start. In its early stages oral cancer may not be noticed by a patient as it may not produce pain or other symptoms.

## Early Detection.

Without an examination by a dentist, most early signs of oral cancer are difficult to detect. If you notice a mouth sore or anything out of the ordinary that does not go away or heal after a couple weeks, discuss this with your dentist. Through the oral exam, your dentist can see if there are any abnormalities or changes that might be indications of oral cancer. Oral health is a good lifelong commitment. With regular visits to your dentist and good oral health routines you will have lots to smile about.



KNOWN RISK FACTORS	POSSIBLE RISK FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tobacco</li><li>• Alcohol</li><li>• Betel Quid and Areca Nut</li><li>• Human Papillomavirus (HPV)</li><li>• Precancerous conditions</li><li>• Previous cancer</li><li>• Family history of squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)</li><li>• Sun exposure</li><li>• Diet low in vegetables &amp; fruit</li><li>• Weakened immune system</li><li>• Graft versus host disease (GVHD)</li><li>• Lichen planus</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor oral health and dental care</li><li>• Poor fitting dentures</li><li>• Second hand smoke</li></ul>

For more information about oral cancer, talk to your dentist or visit [ManitobaDentist.ca](http://ManitobaDentist.ca)



**Talk to your Dentist**  
Good for you. Good for life.

**Manitoba  
Dentist.ca**



**Oral  
Cancer  
isn't this  
easy  
to spot.**

Not everyone can see it,  
but your dentist can.



## Incidence and Survival Rate.

The death rate associated with this cancer is particularly high not because it is hard to discover or diagnose, but due to the cancer being routinely discovered late in its development.

Oral cancer accounts for about 2.2 percent of all new cancer cases in Canada each year. That's more than 3,000 new cases every year.

- Oral cancer is aggressive.
- Oral cancer carries a higher mortality rate than either melanoma or cervical cancer.
- The five-year survival rate for oral cancer is low, at just below 50 percent.
- Early detection results in the survival rate increasing sharply to 80 percent.

## Key Risk Factors.

- **Smoking and Chewing Tobacco** – particularly if combined with heavy alcohol consumption. About 90 percent of people with oral cancer use tobacco.
- **Heavy alcohol consumption** – particularly if combined with smoking.
- **Excessive sun exposure** – particularly to the lips.
- **Age** – oral cancer is more common in people over the age of 50.
- **Gender** – more men than women develop oral cancer

“Smokeless” chewing or spit tobacco is promoted by some as a safer alternative to smoking. It has not been proven to be any safer for those who use it when referring to oral cancers.

The human papilloma virus has been shown to be sexually transmitted between partners, and is conclusively implicated in the increasing incidence of young non-smoking oral cancer patients.

## Symptoms.

- **A sore** on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal.
- **A small ulcer** which looks like a common canker sore.
- **A lump** on the lip or in the mouth or throat.
- **A white or red patch** on the gums, tongue or lining of the mouth.
- **Unusual bleeding, pain or numbness** in the mouth.
- **A sore throat** that does not go away, or a feeling that something is caught in the throat.
- **Difficulty or pain** with chewing or swallowing.
- **Swelling** of the jaw that causes denture to fit poorly or become uncomfortable.
- **A change** in the voice and/or pain in the ear.

Some things as simple as a bite on the inside of your cheek may mimic the look of a dangerous tissue change. It is important to have any sore or discoloured area of your mouth, which does not heal within 14 days, looked at by a professional.

One of the real dangers of this cancer is that in its early stages it can go unnoticed. It can be painless, and little in the way of physical changes may be obvious. The good news is that your dentist or physician can, in many cases, see or feel tissue changes or the actual cancer while it is still very small, or in its earliest stages.

Treatment of oral cancers is multidisciplinary involving the efforts of surgeons, radiation oncologists, chemotherapy oncologists, dental practitioners, nutritionists, and rehabilitation and restorative specialists.



get screened.