



Oral Cancer

Are you at risk?

What are the signs and symptoms?

Should you have an oral cancer exam?

About Oral Cancer

Oral cancer includes cancer of the tongue, hard palate, soft palate, gums, floor of mouth, inner cheeks and lips.

Oral cancer accounts for roughly 2% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand. Approximately 250 people will be diagnosed with oral cancer each year and most will be treated successfully, if treated early.

On average 60% of people with oral cancer will survive more than 5 years.

Oral cancer most often occurs in people over the age of 40 and affects more than twice as many men as women.

Here's what you should watch for...

Possible Signs and Symptoms

See your GP or dentist if any of the following symptoms lasts for more than 3 weeks

- A sore, irritation, lump or thick patch on your lip or in your mouth, especially under dentures
- A white or red patch in your mouth
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Difficulty moving your tongue or jaw
- Pain in your mouth when chewing or moving your tongue or jaw
- Numbness on your tongue or other areas in your mouth
- Swelling of your jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable

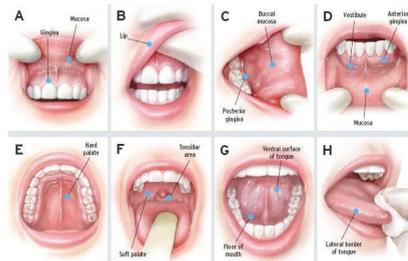
Early detection

It is important to find oral cancer as early as possible when it can be treated more successfully.

An oral cancer examination (oral cancer screening) can detect early signs of cancer. The exam is painless and takes only a few minutes.

The 8-Step Oral Cancer Screening

Your regular dental check-up is an excellent opportunity to have the oral cancer screening examination.



What puts you at risk?

Tobacco and alcohol use: Tobacco use of any kind, including cigarette smoking, puts you at risk. Alcohol use also increases your chances of developing oral cancer. And using tobacco plus alcohol poses a much greater risk than using either substance alone.

Age: Risk increases with age. Oral cancer most often occurs in people over the age of 40.

Sun Exposure: Cancer of the lip can be caused by sun exposure. Regular and thick application of a suitable sunscreen to the lips can help reduce risk.

Diet: A diet low in fruit and vegetables may increase the risk of developing oral cancer.