

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

- lips
- tongue
- gums
- lining inside the lips and cheeks
- floor of the mouth
- roof of the mouth
- the area behind the wisdom teeth or last molar.

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

Incidence and Survival Rates

- Oral cancer represents approximately 2.3% of all cancers in Canada. It is responsible for more than 3,000 new cases and 1,000 new deaths each year.
- The five-year survival rate of oral cancer is approximately 50%.
- Early detection results in the survival rate increasing to 80%.

Key Risk Factors

- Tobacco and alcohol use. About 90% of people with oral cancer use tobacco. Smoking or chewing tobacco when combined with heavy alcohol consumption increases your risk of getting oral cancer. Quitting tobacco and alcohol significantly lowers the risk even after years of use.

- Excessive sun exposure to the lips.
- Poor-fitting dentures.
- Age – oral cancer is more common in people over 50.
- Gender – more men than women develop oral cancer.

Signs and Symptoms

If you have any of the following signs or symptoms see your dentist or physician **immediately**:

- a sore on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal in two weeks
- a lump on the lip, in the mouth or in the throat
- a white or red patch on the gums, tongue or lining of the mouth
- unusual bleeding, pain or numbness in the mouth
- a persistent sore throat or a feeling that you constantly need to clear your throat
- difficulty or pain with chewing or swallowing
- swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- a change in your voice
- pain in your ear that doesn't go away.

(turn over)



Accountable



Collaborative



Common Goals



Dedicated



Evidence-Based Practice



Wellbeing

Best Protection Against Oral Cancer is Self Examination

There are seven easy steps to oral self-examination. Monthly self examination increases your chance of discovering the early signs of oral disease.

1. Head and Neck

Any lumps, bumps or swellings that are only on one side of your face should be looked at by your physician or dentist.



2. Face

Look at the skin on your face. Do you notice any colour changes, sores, moles or growths?



3. Neck

Press along the sides and front of the neck. Do you feel any tenderness or lumps there?



4. Lips

Pull your lower lip down and look at the inside for any sores or colour changes.



Next, use the thumb and index finger to feel the lip for lumps, bumps, or changes in texture. Repeat this on your upper lip.

5. Cheek

Look for red, white, or coloured patches. Next, feel for lumps or tenderness; gently roll your cheek between your index finger and thumb.



6. Roof of the Mouth

Use a mouth mirror or tilt your head back when looking to see if there are any lumps, sores, or coloured patches on the roof of your mouth.



7. Floor of the Mouth and Tongue

Stick out your tongue, look at the top surface. Using a piece of gauze or tissue, gently pull your tongue forward to view one side, then the other. Check the underside of your tongue and the floor of your mouth by placing the tip of your tongue on the roof of the mouth. Check for swellings or colour changes.



Your best defence against oral cancer is early detection.

- Oral cancer is one of the easiest of all cancers to detect. Early signs can often be seen.
- Ask your dentist if an oral cancer screening is done routinely as a part of your regular check-up.
- If you have a concern, see your dentist or physician. **Don't wait!**

For more information check the website at www.saskohc.ca