

NEWS



QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. What are the best questions I can ask my dentist about oral cancer?
- 2. What can I do in my daily routine to help prevent oral cancer?



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1. What should I be looking for in my own mouth that might be a clue that I have an abnormality that might be an early form of cancer or at the beginning stages of cellular changes that could lead to cancer?

What are you doing in your office to enhance early detection of oral cancer and, therefore, save lives?

2. Two of the most commonly known risk factors for oral cancer are tobacco use and excess alcohol consumption. The third and less commonly known about risk factor is HPV (Human Papilloma Virus), an orally sexually transmitted disease. Reducing/eliminating tobacco use, reduction of alcohol consumption, and safe sex practices can greatly reduce an individual's risk dramatically and, therefore, help prevent oral cancer.

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Is a killer hiding under your nose?

Every day in the U.S. approximately 100 people will be newly diagnosed with oral cancer. Every hour of every day, a person will die from it.

With these alarming statistics you would think that this is a disease that Americans are both aware of and are routinely being screened for, but that could not be farther from reality. It remains a killer that will take the lives of about 45 percent of those that receive their diagnosis within five years. In spite of these sobering numbers, there is much you can do to ensure that the words oral cancer and your name are never used in the same sentence.

Risk factors

For decades this disease was the end result of decades of involvement

in two risk factors, heavy tobacco and alcohol use. Avoidance of those risk factors significantly reduces your chances of becoming a statistic. Recently a new, independent cause for the disease has been identified which has surprised many. The same virus that is responsible for cervical cancers in women, HPV#16, a human papilloma virus, now is the fastest growing cause of oral cancer. This revelation has changed the paradigm in many ways. HPV's are ubiquitous in our society, and completely avoiding them is not in your control.

Luckily, most of the 130 varieties are not cancer causing. For the majority of the population, your immune system defends you against them in a robust manner. But for a few, that does not take place. I am one of those individuals, and it almost took my life. As a never smoker, oral cancer was not even on my radar. But I want it to be on yours.

What do you have control over?

What proactive opportunities exist for you? Remaining clear of the

lifestyle choices that are known risk factors, such as tobacco and heavy alcohol use top the list. Remember that this disease is insidious; in its early stages it does not always produce symptoms that you may notice. Because of this, be sure to have a painless, quick, and inexpensive screening at your dentist's office each year. Early detection does save lives.

FACTS

Oral cancer

■ **Close to 36,000 Americans** will be diagnosed with oral or pharyngeal cancer this year. It will cause over 8,000 deaths, killing roughly 1 person per hour, 24 hours per day.

Of those 36,000 newly diagnosed individuals, only slightly more than half will be alive in 5 years.

■ **Worldwide** the problem is much greater, with over 640,000 new cases being found each year.



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