

The
'Look A Head'
Cancer Campaign



**About mouth
and throat
cancer**



www.headandneck.info

Mouth cancer – the facts

Cancer can affect any part of the mouth – lips, tongue, soft and hard palates, gums, inside of the cheeks, tonsil, upper part of the throat. Early detection and treatment are really important to increase the chances of removing the cancer fully and to minimise the effects of treatment to these vital organs.

Over 6,500 people in the UK will be diagnosed with mouth or throat cancer each year, and the number is rising.

Symptoms to watch out for are:

- an ulcer or sore in your mouth
- a lump in the neck or mouth
- a sore or painful throat
- difficulty in swallowing.
- red or white patches
- unexplained pain
- persistent change in voice
- unexplained pain or bleeding

If any of these symptoms persist for four weeks or more, you should see your doctor or dentist urgently.



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Risk factors and prevention

Risk factors are those things that increase your risk of developing a health problem.

In the case of mouth and throat cancer the risk factors are:

- Tobacco use. This means smoking, chewing or using smokeless tobacco in its various forms.
- Regularly drinking more than the recommended safe levels of alcohol. The greater the intake the greater the risk. The risk is even higher if you smoke as well. The recommended amount for a man is no more than 4 units (2 pints of beer) per night and for a woman no more than 3 units (3 small glasses of wine) per night.
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). This virus causes cancer of the cervix and is also linked to mouth and throat cancers. The virus can be passed on through oral sex.

To reduce your risk of mouth and throat cancer:

- Do not use tobacco. Call Smokefree on 0800 022 4332 for help in quitting smoking.
- If you drink a lot, try to cut down. Your doctor can help, or visit www.drinkaware.co.uk
- If you practise oral sex, use a condom. Having several sexual partners multiplies the risk.
- Eat a healthy diet, with plenty of fruit and vegetables. This will help to keep your immune system healthy which can help fight cancers. Foods containing omega-3, such as eggs and fish, can also help to reduce risk.

Your dentist will check your mouth for the earliest signs of cancer. So, visit your dentist for a check-up at least once a year even if you have no teeth.

Head and neck cancer

Know what to look for ...

hoarseness

neck lump

mouth lump

painful throat

mouth ulcer

swallowing problem

If any of these symptoms last for more than four weeks, see your doctor or dentist without delay.

Reduce your risk ...

drink less alcohol

stop smoking

avoid unprotected
oral sex with
multiple partners

avoid chewing tobacco,
betel nut and paan