



# Oral Cancer

For your dental health.

Each year, oral cancer strikes approximately 35 thousand Americans. Of all the major cancers, oral cancer has the worst 5-year survival rate. Only about 50 percent of those diagnosed with oral cancer will survive more than 5 years. In fact, oral cancer kills nearly 9 thousand people each year.

The reason these statistics are so grim is because oral cancer is often detected in its later stages. But when it's detected early, before the disease spreads to destroy healthy tissue, the chances of survival are greatly improved. Because early detection is vital to surviving oral cancer, we will perform a thorough oral cancer screening each time we see you in our office for an exam.



*Early stage of oral cancer*



*A thorough exam*

## What does an oral cancer screening involve?

We'll feel for lumps or abnormal tissue changes on your neck and inside your mouth. We'll thoroughly examine the soft tissues in your mouth, especially the most frequent oral cancer sites: your tongue, the floor of your mouth, your soft palate, your lips, and your gums.

## Reducing your risk of oral cancer

You can help by letting us know if you notice any of these warning signs:

- a red, white, or otherwise discolored patch or lump in or around your mouth;
- a sore that does not heal or that bleeds easily;
- an area that seems to have thickened, raised, or become hardened;
- a rough patch of tissue;
- difficulty chewing or swallowing;
- or a chronic sore throat or hoarseness.



*Avoid excessive alcohol use*

It's vital that you not ignore a mouth sore just because it doesn't hurt; most pre-cancerous and cancerous lesions are completely painless. You can also minimize your chances of developing oral cancer by making some lifestyle changes. Don't smoke or use chewing tobacco, avoid excessive alcohol use, and make sure you're eating plenty of fruits and vegetables each day.