

The two leading causes of oral cancer are:

- ▶ Tobacco
- ▶ Alcohol

The risk of oral cancer is increased significantly if you are both a heavy smoker and a heavy drinker.

Warning signs of oral cancer

You won't always be able to spot the earliest warning signs of oral cancer, which is why regular check-ups with your dentist are so important.

You should see your dentist if you do notice any of the following:

- ▶ Any sores (or ulcers) on the face, neck or mouth that do not heal within three weeks
- ▶ Swellings, lumps or bumps on the lips, gums or other areas inside the mouth
- ▶ White or red patches anywhere in your mouth
- ▶ Numbness, loss of feeling, or pain in any area of the face, neck or mouth
- ▶ A tooth, (or teeth) that becomes loose for no obvious reason
- ▶ Swelling of the jaw causing dentures to fit poorly

Preventing oral cancer

- ▶ Quit using tobacco products
- ▶ Reduce alcohol consumption
- ▶ Visit the dentist regularly, even if you wear dentures

'If In Doubt, Get Checked Out'.

Early detection of oral cancer improves survival chances from just 50% to more than 90%.



Check yourself in 8 easy steps against oral cancer

1. Head and Neck

- ▶ Look at your face and neck in a mirror.
- ▶ Normally, the left and right sides of the face have the same shape.
- ▶ Look for any lumps, bumps or swellings that are only on one side of your face.



2. Face

- ▶ Examine the skin on your face.
- ▶ Do you notice any colour or size changes, sores, moles or growths?



3. Neck

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

4. Lips

- ▶ Pull your lower lip down and look inside for any sores or colour changes.
- ▶ Next use your thumb and forefinger to feel the lips for lumps, bumps or changes in texture.
- ▶ Repeat this on the upper lip.



5. Gums

- ▶ Use your fingers thumb and forefinger on the inside and outside of the gum working your way around the gum to feel for anything unusual.

6. Cheeks

- ▶ Use your fingers to pull out your cheek so you can see inside. Look for red, white or dark patches.

- ▶ Put your index finger on the inside of your cheek and your thumb on the outside
- ▶ Gently squeeze and roll your cheek between your fingers to check for any lumps or areas of tenderness.
- ▶ Repeat this on the other cheek.



7. Roof of the Mouth

- ▶ Tilt your head back and open your mouth wide to see if there are any lumps or if the colour is different than usual.
- ▶ Run your finger on the roof of your mouth to feel for lumps.



8. Floor of the Mouth and Tongue

- ▶ Stick out your tongue and look at the top surface for any colour and texture changes.
- ▶ Gently pull your tongue forward to look at first one side and then the other.
- ▶ Look for any swellings or colour changes. Examine the underside of your tongue by placing the tip of the tongue on the roof of your mouth.
- ▶ Look at the floor of your mouth and the underside of your tongue for colour changes that are very different from what is normal.
- ▶ Gently press your finger along the underside of your tongue to feel for any lumps or swellings.



Protect yourself from oral cancer

- Stop using tobacco products
- Visit the dentist regularly

The importance of visiting the dentist

It is important to visit a dentist regularly (even if you wear dentures). Dentists can detect problems in your mouth at the early stages of oral cancer. You should have a dental check-up at least every year. Oral cancer tends not to cause any noticeable symptoms during the early stages. If oral cancer is recognised early, then the chances of a cure are good.

You are entitled to **FREE NHS dental services** if you:

- Are under 18 years of age
- Are 18 years of age and in full-time education
- Are pregnant
- Had a baby in the last 12 months
- Are currently in prison or in a young offender's institution
- Hold a HC2 Certificate
- Have an NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate/Card

You are also entitled to **FREE NHS dental services** if you **OR your partner** receive:

- Income support
- Income-based Jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit Guarantee
- Universal Credit (under certain circumstances)

To Find Your Local NHS Dentist:

Visit NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/dentists
Or call your local Healthwatch on **0116 251 8313**

If you do not have a dentist and require urgent dental care please call 111.



Help with quitting

Giving up using any tobacco product (smoking, smokeless tobacco or shisha) can significantly reduce your risk of oral cancer and improve your oral health.

For **FREE** advice and help on quitting:

- Speak to your doctor or dentist
- Visit LiveWell Leicester for help to stop smoking in Leicester at www.livewell.leicester.gov.uk
- Telephone on **0116 454 4000**



Oral Cancer



Oral cancer is also known as mouth cancer

Oral cancer can start anywhere in your mouth including lips, tongue, gums, under your tongue, inside your cheeks, the roof of your mouth and the area behind your wisdom teeth.



An estimated 2,702 people lost their life to mouth cancer in the UK in 2020/21, that's seven people each day.

Healthy Teeth, Happy Smiles!