

Early Detection

It is important to find oral cancer as early as possible when it can be treated successfully.

An oral cancer examination can detect early signs of cancer. Oral cancer exams are painless and quick – and take only a few minutes.

Your regular dental check-up or physical examination is an excellent opportunity to have the examination. During the examination, your health-care provider will check your face, neck, lips and entire mouth for possible signs of cancer.

Some parts of the pharynx or back of the throat are not visible during an oral cancer exam, and you may be referred to a specialist.



Picture courtesy of DeLong, L. & Burkhart, N. (February 2009). "The Intraoral and Extraoral Exam" ce337 Available at www.dentalcare.com/en-US/conteduc/conteduc.aspx.

Need Help Quitting Tobacco Use?

The North Dakota Tobacco Quitline offers free assistance to help people quit using tobacco products. Call **1.800.QUIT.NOW** for free telephone counseling, support and tips to help you quit for good.

QUITLINE
1•800•QUIT•NOW

For more information about oral cancer or other oral health topics, contact:

Oral Health Program
Division of Family Health
North Dakota Department of Health
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Dept. 301
Bismarck, N.D. 58505-0200
701.328.2356 or 800.472.2286
www.ndhealth.gov/oralhealth



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH



Oral Cancer

Are you at risk?

Facts about Oral Cancer

In North Dakota each year, more than 76 people get oral and pharyngeal cancers, and eight people die from oral and pharyngeal cancers.

Oral cancer is a type of cancer that occurs anywhere in the mouth or on the lips.

Approximately 35,000 new cases of oral cancer are expected in the United States each year.

Oral cancer can spread quickly. On average, more than 50 percent of those with oral cancer will not survive more than five years.

Oral cancer occurs most often in people older than 40 and affects twice as many men as women.

Tobacco use, alcohol use or use of both substances together are related to 75 percent of oral cancers. Individuals who use both tobacco and alcohol are at higher risk.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is related to oral cancer.

Prolonged sun exposure increases the risk of lip cancer.

Signs and Symptoms

It is important to consult with a dentist or doctor if any of the following symptoms last more than two weeks.

- A sore, lump or thick patch on your lip or in your mouth or throat that does not heal
- Patches in your mouth or on your lips that are white or red
- A sore throat or feeling that something is caught in your throat
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Difficulty moving your jaw or your tongue
- Numbness on your tongue or other areas of your mouth
- Swelling of your jaw that causes your dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- Loosening of your teeth or pain around your teeth or jaw
- Pain in one ear without hearing loss



Preventing Oral Cancer

Most oral cancer is preventable. **Early detection is important!**

- ✓ Have an oral cancer examination once a year. Ask your dentist or doctor for an oral cancer exam during your visit.
- ✓ Do not use tobacco products – cigarettes, chew or snuff, pipes or cigars. Tobacco in all forms plays a role in oral cancers.
- ✓ If you drink alcohol, do so only in moderation. Excessive alcohol use can increase your risk of oral cancer.
- ✓ Use lip balm that contains sunscreen with an SPF of 15 to 30 and reapply every two hours while in the sun. Exposure to sunlight is a risk factor for lip cancer.
- ✓ Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day as part of a low-fat, high-fiber diet may help reduce your cancer risk.

