



Dental visits may help reduce the risk of oral cancer

Did you know that around 20% of people diagnosed with oral cancers are younger than 55?¹ Regular dental checkups may help detect early warning signs of the disease. There are also things you can do to reduce your risk and be aware of potential problems in addition to your regular dental checkups.

RISK FACTORS FOR ORAL CANCER

It is important to be aware of risk factors for oral cancer, including:

- **Age** — oral cancer is more common in older adults.
- **Gender** — oral cancers are more common in males than females.
- **Alcohol and tobacco** — about 75% of all people who get oral cancer use tobacco.
- **Sun exposure** — this increases the risk, especially for cancers of the lips.
- **HPV** — human papillomavirus (HPV) is a virus associated with oral cancers, especially in the back of the throat. HPV is a risk factor for younger patients. Vaccinations are available and are strongly recommended to help prevent HPV.²

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Reducing the risk of oral cancer (continued)



SYMPTOMS OF ORAL CANCER

Oral cancer can affect any part of the mouth, including the throat, tongue, gums, cheeks and lips. Here are some signs and symptoms to look out for:

- White or red patches in the mouth, or areas of the mouth that bleed frequently
- Sores in the mouth that do not heal within two weeks
- Swelling or lumps in the mouth, neck or throat
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Mouth and ear pain
- Persistent sore throat or hoarseness³

If you notice any of these symptoms, or have a family history that includes oral cancer, schedule an appointment with your dentist or health care provider for a thorough oral examination.

EARLY DETECTION

Early detection is critical in treating oral cancer and increasing your chances of a successful recovery. If you have concerns, don't wait! Take action and schedule an appointment with your health care provider or dentist. Oral cancer screenings are typically quick and painless and can help detect oral cancer at an early stage.³

TREATMENT

Radiation and chemotherapy directly affect salivary glands and oral tissues and may increase the risk of oral pain, infections and cavities.⁴ Side effects may be reduced with diligent oral care and the participation of a dental team during cancer treatment. Consult your dentist for more information.

YOUR DELTA DENTAL PLAN LIKELY COVERS ORAL CANCER SCREENINGS

As a Delta Dental of Virginia member, you and your covered dependents have access to comprehensive dental coverage — that includes coverage for preventive services like oral cancer screenings. For questions about your benefits, contact Delta Dental of Virginia's customer service department at 800.237.6060 to see exactly what may be covered under your dental plan.

If you haven't already, now is the perfect time to schedule your next dental appointment and discuss oral cancer screening with your dentist.

¹"Key statistics for Oral Cavity and Oropharyngeal Cancers," www.cancer.org/cancer/types/oral-cavity-and-oropharyngeal-cancer/about/key-statistics.html. American Cancer Society. Accessed August 2024. ²"Oral cancer risk factors and prevention," www.deltadental.com/us/en/protect-my-smile/overall-health/oral-cancer/oral-cancer-risk-factors-prevention.html. Accessed August 2024. ³"The facts about oral cancer: screenings, symptoms, and prevention," www.deltadental.com/us/en/protect-my-smile/overall-health/oral-cancer/the-facts-about-oral-cancer-screenings-symptoms-and-prevention.html. Accessed August 2024. ⁴"What is dry mouth," www.deltadental.com/us/en/protect-my-smile/oral-health-conditions/dry-mouth.html. Accessed 2023.