

# Reducing your risk of mouth & throat cancer

## Lifestyle measures

- Stop smoking (or cut back) and avoid exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Stop drinking alcohol (or cut back on your drinking).
- Stay safe in the sun and wear sunscreen/zinc or lip balm to protect your lips.

## See your dentist or hygienist

- Remove causes of oral irritation, such as broken restorations or badly fitting dentures.
- Make sure your dentist performs an oral cancer screening during your routine check-ups.
- Have your teeth professionally cleaned on a schedule as recommended by your dentist.

## Check your mouth monthly

See your dentist if you note any of the following.

Sores, lumps, patches, pain, for example:

- a sore in your mouth that doesn't heal (most common symptom)
- a pain in your mouth that doesn't go away (another common symptom)
- a persistent lump or thickening in your cheek
- a persistent white or red patch on your gums, tongue, tonsils, or lining of your mouth
- a sore throat or a feeling that something is caught in your throat that doesn't go away.

Problems with using your mouth and throat, for example:

- difficulty chewing or swallowing
- difficulty moving your jaw or tongue
- a numb tongue or mouth
- swelling in your jaw that causes dentures to fit badly or become uncomfortable
- loosening of your teeth or pain around the teeth and jaw.

Other problems, such as:

- voice changes
- a lump or mass in your neck
- weight loss
- persistent bad breath.

## General advice

If you're over 40, smoke tobacco, or drink alcohol, make sure you get an oral cancer exam every year.

If you have a suspicious sore spot or unexplained lesion in your mouth, get a check-up by your dentist within two weeks.

*Written by HealthInfo clinical advisers. Updated March 2018.*