

dental clinic > Richard Kabanda

Smoking and oral cancer linked

Oral cancer is the cancer that occurs on the lips, inside the mouth, on the back of the throat, the tonsils or salivary glands. It is more common in men than women, and most likely to strike people over 40 years. Smoking in combination with heavy alcohol use is a key risk factor.

Studies show that if oral cancer is not detected early, it can require surgery, radiation therapy or chemotherapy and can be fatal. Oral cancer is on the rise and is a global public health challenges, which is costly to treat.

Symptoms of Oral Cancer

It is difficult to spot the earliest warning signs of oral cancer, which is why regular checkups with your dentist or physician are important. The dentist is trained to detect early signs of oral cancer. However, you should also see your dentist if you notice any of the following:

- A sore on the lips, gums or inside of your mouth that bleeds easily and does not heal.
- A lump or thickening in the cheek that you can feel with your tongue
- Loss of feeling or numbness in any part of your mouth
- White or red patches on the gums, tongue or inside of mouth
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing food
- Soreness or unexplained pain in your mouth, or feeling that something is caught in your throat with no known cause.
- Swelling of the jaw causing your denture to fit poorly.

How to prevent oral cancer

There is a big connection between smoking and oral cancer. Smoking also affects your general health, making it harder to fight infections and recover from injuries or surgery. Many smokers find they can't smell or taste as well



Smoking a pipe or chewing tobacco can increase cancer risk. NET PHOTO.

as before, and risk developing bad breath and stained teeth. Your oral health is also at risk every time you light up. Smoking cigarettes, a pipe or a cigar greatly increases your chances of developing cancer of the larynx, mouth, throat and esophagus. Because so many people are not aware of or ignore early symptoms, oral cancer often spreads before it is detected.

Chewing Tobacco - chronic users of tobacco are 50 times more likely to develop oral cancer than non users. Chronic and heavy use of alcohol also increases your risk of cancer, and alcohol combined with tobacco creates a high risk.

Seeking treatment

After a diagnosis has been made, dental professionals especially oral surgeons develop a treatment plan to fit your needs. Surgery is usually required, followed by radiation and chemotherapy. It's important to see a dentist who's familiar with the changes these therapies may cause in the mouth.

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