

Recognising signs and symptoms of mouth cancer

It's important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of mouth cancer. The earlier the disease is spotted the better the chances of a complete cure.

Risks and what to look out for

This form of the disease can happen in or on any part of the mouth, including lining of the mouth, gums, tongue, lips, and throat.

Smoking, regularly drinking large amounts of alcohol, too much sun or use of sunbeds, and the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), can all increase the risk of developing mouth cancer.

In its very early stages, mouth cancer can be easy to ignore. The key signs to watch out for are:

- an ulcer on the lip, tongue, or in the mouth that doesn't heal within three weeks
- pain in the mouth or earache that doesn't go away
- a white or red patch in the mouth that doesn't go away
- a lump or thickening in the mouth, throat, or on the lip
- difficulty or pain when chewing, swallowing, or speaking
- bleeding or numbness in the mouth
- a lump in the neck
- loose teeth for no obvious reason
- unexplained weight loss over a short space of time

[Mouth cancer](#) and the treatment required can be traumatic, as this may affect functions such as speech, chewing and swallowing.

These symptoms are often caused by something less serious and don't usually mean it's cancer. However, if in doubt get checked out by your dentist or GP.

Reduce mouth cancer risk

The most important things to try and reduce the risk of mouth cancer are:

- check for changes in your mouth
- visit your dentist regularly
- get help to [stop smoking](#)
- [limit the amount of alcohol](#) you drink
- reduce the chances of getting [HPV](#) by practising [safer sex](#)
- use sunscreen (at least sun protection factor 15 and four stars) on your lips in hot weather
- don't use [sunbeds](#)
- exercise for at least 30 minutes a day
- eat a [healthy diet](#), including five portions of fruit and vegetables

daily

Visit your dentist

It's important to visit your dentist at least once a year, even if you no longer have your own teeth.

Dentists are trained to spot early signs of mouth and salivary gland cancer and can easily see parts of your mouth that you cannot see.

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