

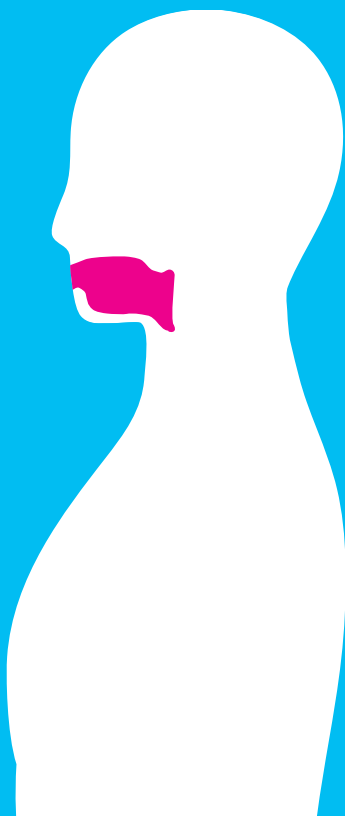
MOUTH CANCER

How to spot the signs and symptoms
and reduce your risk

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CANCER
RESEARCH
UK



Mouth cancer (also called oral cancer) is becoming more common in the UK. But around 9 in 10 cases could be prevented by changes in lifestyle.

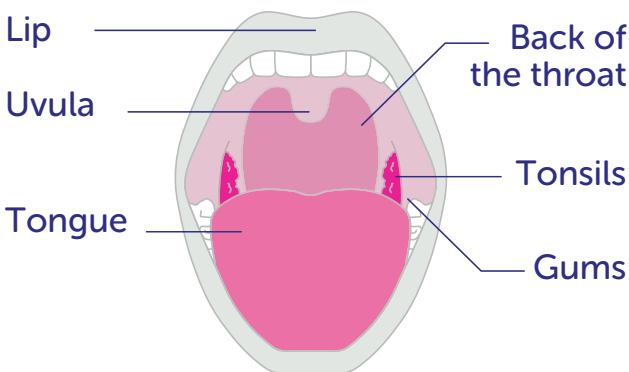
Most cases of mouth cancer are diagnosed in people over the age of 50.

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- In this leaflet you can find out about:**
- the signs and symptoms to look out for
 - how to reduce the risk of mouth cancer.

The mouth

Mouth cancer can develop in any part of the mouth including places that you may not normally see. This could include the gums, under the tongue, the tonsils and upper part of the throat.



What affects your risk?

- **Age**

Most mouth cancer cases are diagnosed in those aged 50 and over.

- **Gender**

Mouth cancer is almost twice as common in men as in women.

- **Personal history**

Risk of mouth cancer is higher if you've had some types of cancer before such as mouth, sinus or throat cancer.

- **HPV (human papillomavirus) infection**

HPV infection increases the risk of some types of mouth and upper throat cancers. HPV is a very common virus that usually clears up on its own. It can be passed on through close skin-to-skin contact, usually during sex.

How can you reduce your risk?



Stop smoking, or chewing tobacco or betel nut

There is no safe way to use tobacco. Cigarettes, cigars or pipes all increase the risk of mouth cancer. Smokers are more than 3 times as likely to develop mouth cancer as non-smokers.

People who chew tobacco or betel nut (areca nut, found in gutkha, betel quid or paan) – with or without tobacco – are also at higher risk.



Drink less alcohol

Drinking alcohol increases the risk of mouth cancer. The less you drink the lower your risk.

The risk is even higher for people who use tobacco and drink alcohol



Eat your 5-a-day

Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables may help to reduce the risk of mouth cancer.

What should I look out for?

If you notice any of the following changes, go and see your doctor or dentist:

- an ulcer or sore in your mouth or on your tongue that lasts longer than 3 weeks
- an unexplained lump in your neck
- a lump on your lip or in your mouth
- a red or red and white patch in your mouth.

It probably won't be mouth cancer, but if it is, getting it diagnosed and treated at an early stage could make all the difference. Get to know what's normal for you, and tell your doctor or dentist if you notice any changes that are unusual or don't go away.



**Spotting
mouth cancer
early increases
the chance
of successful
treatment**

It is important to visit the dentist regularly even if you don't have your own teeth any more. They can easily check the areas you cannot see. Ask your dentist if they are looking for signs of mouth cancer, especially if you are over 50, smoke, chew tobacco or betel nut, or drink alcohol.

Further information

You can find out more about cancer at www.cruk.org/about-cancer

Find out more about our health messages at www.cruk.org/health

For more about the signs and symptoms of cancer visit www.spotcancerearly.com

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone **0808 800 4040**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

All our leaflets are thoroughly researched and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. They are reviewed by independent experts and updated regularly. You can order our full range of leaflets free online at www.cruk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK

We pioneer life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we're all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers.

Together we will beat cancer sooner. If you would like to support our work, call **0300 123 1861** or visit our website www.cruk.org

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