

Oral Cancer & Oral Health

"...regular dental exams of the mouth are important for prevention and early detection..."



Oral Health in Wisconsin — A Fact Sheet

Why is oral cancer a public health issue?

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. It is believed that cancer is caused by both external factors (tobacco, chemicals, infectious organism) and by internal factors



(inherited mutations, hormones, immune conditions and mutations that occur from metabolism).

Oral Cancers are cancers that affect any area of the oral cavity including the lips, upper/lower jaw, throat, tongue, gums and cheeks.

Causes and prevention

As with any cancer early detection and intervention is key to reducing a potentially poor outcome. It is very important for you to examine your mouth regularly and pay close attention to any changes you might observe, even though they might be painless. Seeing a dentist regularly for preventive oral health exams is also essential in detecting oral health disease(s). Adults between the ages of 18 and 39 should have an oral cancer exam a minimum of every three years. Adults over 40 years of age should have comprehensive oral cancer exam every year. A thorough oral cancer exam is a standard part of your regular dental visit and can be performed by a licensed dentist or dental hygienist.



The risk factors associated with oral cancer include heavy smoking or use of smokeless tobacco products. A number

Oral Cancer Symptoms

- ✓ A sore on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal
- ✓ A lump on the lip or in the mouth or throat
- ✓ A white or red patch on the gums, tongue, or lining of the mouth
- ✓ Unusual bleeding, pain, or numbness in the mouth;
- ✓ A sore throat that does not go away, or a feeling that something is caught in the throat
- ✓ Difficulty or pain with chewing or swallowing
- ✓ Swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- ✓ A change in the voice

These symptoms may be caused by cancer or by other, less serious problems. It is important to see a dentist or physician about any symptoms like these, so that the problem can be diagnosed and treated as early as possible.

of studies have shown that cigar and pipe smokers have the same risk as cigarette smokers. Don't start smoking and if you currently smoke or use smokeless tobacco STOP! Smoking and smokeless tobacco are contributing factors to approximately 75% of all oral cancers. Studies indicate that smokeless tobacco users are at particular risk of developing oral cancer. There are many smoking cessation aids available to help you stop smoking. At your next medical or dental appointment, ask your physician or dentist about these options.

Excessive alcohol use and prolonged exposure to the sun are also contributing factors to oral cancer. Reducing your alcohol intake and wearing sufficient sunblock when you are outside in the sun will also help to lessen your risk of developing oral cancer.

Too Deadly to Ignore

Oral cancer will be diagnosed in an estimated 30,000 Americans each year and will cause more than 8,000 deaths. The disease kills one person every hour—more than cervical cancer, Hodgkin’s disease, or malignant melanoma. Relative survival rates are among the lowest of all major cancers. Only one-half the number of persons diagnosed with oral cancer are alive five years after the diagnosis.

Survival rates for oral cancer among minorities have decreased.

Oral cancer affects African American men more than any other population, in fact it is the 4th most common cancer in African American men.

Oral cancer is most curable when it is recognized and diagnosed early. If you have risk factors that might predispose you to oral cancer seeing your medical or dental care provider is key to your overall health and well being!

How is Wisconsin doing?

- ✓ Age-adjusted oral and pharyngeal cancer incidence and mortality rates have decreased slightly or remained the same over the past decade in both Wisconsin and the United States.
- ✓ Incidence rates are twice as high in men compared to women, with 16.2 new cases per 100,000 population for men and 6.8 per 100,000 population for women in Wisconsin in 2003-2006.
- ✓ African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with oral cancer (13.0 per 100,000) compared to whites (11.0 per 100,000).
- ✓ In addition, African Americans are also more likely to die from oral and pharyngeal cancer (3.9 per 100,000) compared to whites (2.4 per 100,000).

What is Wisconsin doing?

- ✓ Wisconsin’s Tobacco Prevention and Control Program launched the “You Are Not Sheep” campaign in the summer of 2009 to promote awareness of the health effects of smokeless tobacco and the tobacco industry’s targeting of youth. The campaign included radio and online advertising and ran for one month. Ads ran on popular youth radio stations and websites. All campaign materials directed youth to visit www.myspace.com/youarenotsheep for more information. The campaign generated the following:
 - 9.5 million online ad views
 - The MySpace page received 4,500 visits (350% more than our goal of 1,000 visits)
 - 120 MySpace “friends”
 - As of July 15, 2010 — Wisconsin is now SMOKE FREE!

References

Source: Wisconsin Cancer Reporting System 1995-2006 consolidated data set, prepared in SEER*Stat software, version 6.5.2.

Wisconsin Cancer Reporting System, Office of Health Informatics, Division of Public Health, Department of Health Services.

Suggested Notes: This data set contains invasive cases only (except bladder), Indian Health Service linkage, and NAACCR Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander algorithm results for race and ethnicity categories. Rates are per 100,000 population and are age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S standard population.

Mortality data:

Source: SEER*Stat Database Mortality file, accessed in SEER*Stat. software, version 6.5.2: Underlying mortality data provided by the National Center for Health Statistics.

Note: Rates are per 100,000 and age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

American Cancer Society Fact and Figures. (2008). <http://www.cancer.org>

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For more information, contact:

Division of Public Health,
Oral Health Program,
PO Box 2659,
Madison, WI 53701-2659
(608) 266-5152