

April Is Oral Cancer Awareness Month

Dental associations urge regular oral cancer examinations—early detection saves lives!

Rosemont, IL (April 1, 2014) Oral and oropharyngeal cancer (cancer of the mouth and upper throat) collectively kill nearly one person every hour of every day of the year¹. Of the people newly diagnosed with these cancers, 40 percent will not survive longer than five years. Moreover, many who do survive suffer long-term problems, such as severe facial disfigurement or difficulties with eating and speaking.

The death rate associated with oral and oropharyngeal cancers remains particularly high because the cancers routinely are discovered late in their development. Fortunately, when oral and oropharyngeal cancers are detected and treated early, mortality and treatment-related health problems are reduced. As the nation prepares to observe the 15th Annual Oral Cancer Awareness Month this April, the Academy of General Dentistry (agd.org), American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology (aaomp.org), the American Academy of Oral Medicine (aaom.com), American Academy of Periodontology (perio.org), the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (MyOMS.org), the American Dental Association (ada.org), and the American Dental Hygienists' Association (adha.org) have joined the Oral Cancer Foundation in its campaign to remind everyone that regular oral cancer examinations by your oral health professional remain the best method to detect oral cancer in its early stages.

Be mindful of symptoms

Your mouth is one of your body's most important early warning systems. In between dental visits, it is important for patients to be aware of the following signs and symptoms, and to see a dental professional if they do not improve or disappear after two-three weeks:

- a sore, or soreness or irritation that doesn't go away
- red or white patches, or pain, tenderness, or numbness in mouth or lips
- lumps, thickening tissues, rough spots, crusty or eroded areas
- difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking, or moving your jaw or tongue
- a change in the way your teeth fit together when you close your mouth

When it comes to symptoms, keep this two-three week time period in mind, but always call your dentist right away if you have any immediate concerns.

Factors that may increase risk

Research has identified a number of factors that may contribute to the development of oral cancer. Historically, those at an especially high risk of developing oral cancer have been heavy drinkers and smokers older than age 50, but today the cancer also is occurring more frequently in younger, nonsmoking people. The sexually transmitted human papillomavirus 16 (HPV) is related to the increasing incidence of oropharyngeal cancer (most commonly involving tonsillar tissue, including the base of tongue) in that younger population. HPV caused oropharyngeal cancer may present with one or more of the following persistent (longer than two-three weeks) signs and symptoms:

- a painless lump or swelling felt in the neck
- sore throat, difficulty swallowing, or pain when swallowing
- swelling of the tonsillar areas at the back of the mouth

¹ SEER – National Vital Statistics Reports, Dec. 2013.

Be aware of the symptoms and risk factors of oral and oropharyngeal cancer. Early detection and treatment may well be the key to a complete recovery.

If you have never had an oral cancer examination, there is no better time to schedule one than during Oral Cancer Awareness Month in April. When you do, be sure to ask that this examination be made a routine part of all of your future dental check-ups.

For a list of local dental professionals who are participating in this year's event by offering free oral cancer screenings, visit the [Oral Cancer Foundation's website](#) today!

For more information about oral cancer, and its diagnosis and treatment, visit the following organizations' websites.

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About the Oral Cancer Foundation

The Oral Cancer Foundation, founded by oral cancer survivor Brian R. Hill, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) public service charity that provides information, patient support, sponsorship of research, and advocacy related to this disease. Oral cancer is the largest group of those cancers that fall into the head and neck cancer category. Common names for it include such things as mouth cancer, tongue cancer, head and neck cancer, and throat cancer. It maintains a web site at <http://www.oralcancer.org>, which receives millions of hits per month. Supporting the foundation's goals is a scientific advisory board composed of leading cancer authorities from varied medical and dental specialties, and from prominent educational, treatment, and research institutions in the United States. For more information visit the Oral Cancer Foundation Web site at www.oralcancerfoundation.org.

About the Academy of General Dentistry

The Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) is a professional association of 38,000 general dentists dedicated to providing quality dental care and oral health education to the public. AGD members stay up-to-date in their profession through a commitment to continuing education. Founded in 1952, the AGD is the second largest dental association in the United States, and it is the only association that exclusively represents the needs and interests of general dentists. A general dentist is the primary care provider for patients of all ages and is responsible for the diagnosis, treatment, management, and overall coordination of services related to patients' oral health needs. For more information about the AGD, visit agd.org. The AGD is a member of the [Partnership for Healthy Mouths, Healthy Lives](#), a first-of-its-kind national dental coalition composed of 37 leading dental health organizations. The Partnership's campaign is designed to educate parents and caregivers on how to improve their children's oral health in simple ways. The campaign offers families oral health resources through the Web site 2min2x.org.

***The American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology (AAOMP)** represents the dental specialty that identifies and manages diseases affecting the oral and maxillofacial regions and investigates the causes, processes and effects of these diseases. Our clinical practitioners, researchers, educators and microscopic diagnosticians collaborate with other dental and medical professionals to advance oral health care. Oral and maxillofacial pathologists (OMP) are uniquely trained to: Efficiently address both diagnosis and treatment of oral disease; rapidly and reliably establish the critical connection between oral disease and systemic disease and combine expertise in histopathologic diagnosis, clinical diagnosis and treatment. For more information visit the American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathologists Web site at www.aaomp.org.*

The American Academy of Oral Medicine (AAOM)

Oral Medicine is the discipline of dentistry concerned with the oral health care of medically complex patients-- including the diagnosis and management of medical conditions that affect the oral and maxillofacial region. Our members care for thousands of patients whose underlying medical condition affect oral health and delivery of dental care. We advocate for optimal oral health and healthcare for everyone with medical illness. Founded in 1945, AAOM offers credentialing, resources and professional community for oral medicine practitioners. Our

membership provides care to thousands. For more information visit the American Academy of Oral Medicine Web site at www.aaom.com.

The American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) is the professional organization for periodontists – specialists in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases affecting the gums and supporting structures of the teeth, and in the placement of dental implants. Periodontists are also dentistry’s experts in the treatment of oral inflammation. They receive three additional years of specialized training following dental school, and periodontics is one of the nine dental specialties recognized by the American Dental Association. The AAP has 8,300 members world-wide. For more information visit the American Academy of Periodontology Web site at www.perio.org.

About the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

The experts in face, mouth and jaw surgery® – The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS) is the professional organization representing more than 10,000 oral and maxillofacial surgeons, OMS residents and professional allied staff in the United States. AAOMS supports its fellows’ and members’ ability to practice their specialty through education, research and advocacy. AAOMS fellows and members comply with rigorous continuing education requirements and submit to periodic office anesthesia evaluations. For additional information about oral and maxillofacial surgery, visit the AAOMS Web site at MyOMS.org.

About the American Dental Association

The not-for-profit ADA is the nation's largest dental association, representing 157,000 dentist members. The premier source of oral health information, the ADA has advocated for the public's health and promoted the art and science of dentistry since 1859. The ADA's state-of-the-art research facilities develop and test dental products and materials that have advanced the practice of dentistry and made the patient experience more positive. The ADA Seal of Acceptance long has been a valuable and respected guide to consumer dental care products. The monthly The Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA) is the ADA's flagship publication and the best-read scientific journal in dentistry. For more information about the ADA, visit ada.org. For more information on oral health, including prevention, care and treatment of dental disease, visit the ADA’s consumer Website MouthHealthy.org.

About the American Dental Hygienists’ Association

The American Dental Hygienists’ Association (ADHA) is the largest national organization representing the professional interests of more than 150,000 dental hygienists across the country. Dental hygienists are preventive oral health professionals, licensed in dental hygiene, who provide educational, clinical and therapeutic services that support total health through the promotion of optimal oral health. For more information about ADHA, dental hygiene or the link between oral health and general health, visit ADHA at www.adha.org.

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