

About Oral Cancer

Most people are surprised to learn that one American dies every hour from oral cancer; a death rate that has remained virtually unchanged for more than 40 years. In fact, recent statistics published by the American Cancer Society indicate that while the incidence and death rates for cancers overall has decreased, the incidence of oral cancer has increased by 5.5% and the death rate has increased by 1.5%

Oral cancer is far too often discovered in late stage development, the primary reason for the consistently high death rate. Oral cancer treatment often results in disfiguring effects on patients, and can seriously compromise their quality of life. Early detection and diagnosis can make a tremendous difference in life expectancy; oral cancer is 90% curable when found in its early stages. Unfortunately, 70% of oral cancers are diagnosed in the late stages, III and IV, leading to a five-year survival rate of 57%. In other words 43% of those diagnosed with oral cancer will die within 5 years.

Relative Oral Cancer Risk by Patient Profile

As is the case with most cancers, age is the primary risk factor for oral cancer. Approximately 90% of oral cancer victims are age 40 and older, recent studies indicate that increasingly, patients younger than age 40 are being diagnosed with oral cancer. Though tobacco and alcohol use are the primary lifestyle risk factors that contribute to the development of oral cancer, 25% of oral cancer victims do not use tobacco or alcohol, and have no lifestyle risk factors. Oral cancer affects men more than women, 2:1, but oral cancer in women is on the rise nationwide

Statistics and Facts

The Deadly Statistics

- Every hour of every day, one American dies of oral cancer.
- The mortality rate associated with oral cancer has not improved significantly in the last 40 years. In fact, recent statistics published by the American Cancer Society indicate that while the incidence and death rates for cancers overall has decreased, the incidence for oral cancer has increased by 5.5% and the death rate has increased by 1.5%.
- The death rate in the United States for oral cancer is higher than that of cervical cancer, Hodgkin's disease, cancer of the brain, liver, testes, kidney or ovarian cancer.
- More than 30,000 Americans will receive an oral cancer diagnosis this year. In five years, less than 57% will still be alive.
- 8,000 Americans will die each year of oral cancer.

Examination Frequency

It is recommended that a screening be performed at the following intervals:

- 18 – 40 years old, no smoking history – every 2-3 years (Oral cancer in young people is directly related to increase in the HPV virus, which is also implicated in many cases of cervical cancer)
- 40+ years old – once per year
- History of smoking at any age – every 6 months (Smoking, drinking and age are the 3 most important risk factors in acquiring oral cancer, although recently 25% of all oral cancer diagnosis have no risk factors at all)

