

Eggert Family Dentistry

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Oral Cancer Fact Sheet

We provide oral cancer screenings as part of our routine maintenance examinations because we want to help catch this terrible disease in its early stages. Sadly, one person dies every hour from oral cancer in the United States and over 25% of victims do not smoke and have no other risk factors. More people die from oral cancer than either cervical cancer or melanoma (skin cancer).

Oral cancer often starts as a tiny, unnoticed white or red spot or sore anywhere in the mouth. It can affect any area of the oral cavity including the lips, gum tissue, cheek lining, tongue, and the hard or soft palate. Usually oral cancer does not have symptoms until the late stages of the disease.

Things we look for during your oral cancer screening:

- Persistent swellings
- White, red, or speckled spots
- Bleeding
- Numbness or pain
- Difficulty with chewing
- Hoarseness
- Chronic sore throat
- Weight loss

Risk factors for oral cancer include:

- Tobacco use in any form
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Age (more than 95% of cases are over 40 years of age)
- Gender (male to female ratio is 2:1)
- Viruses (especially HPV, HIV, EBV, HSV)
- Systemic diseases (like HCV, liver disease, syphilis, HIV, renal)

Thorough oral cancer screenings by us, your dental team, are essential in the early detection of cancerous and pre-cancerous conditions. You may have a very small, but dangerous, oral spot or sore and not be aware of it. During your maintenance examination, we will carefully inspect the inside of your mouth and tongue looking for possible lesions. Although most things we may notice are harmless, some are not. If you have a suspicious lesion, we will measure the area and decide if it is important for you to follow up with an oral surgeon or when it is important for us to re-evaluate the area. Your health and long life are very important to us!