

Oral Cancer



Overview

This is a cancer that forms in a part of your oral cavity. That includes your lips, tongue, mouth and throat. Oral cancers can be serious and hard to treat. They can spread through your lymphatic system to other parts of your body.

Causes

Cancer is caused by a mutation in a cell's genetic code. The cell begins to divide quickly and out of control, forming more cancer cells. We don't always understand what causes cell mutations. But we know your risk for oral cancer is higher if you use tobacco or drink a lot of alcohol. Oral cancer is often linked to the HPV virus. Your risk for oral cancer is higher if you are male, if you get a lot of sun exposure, or if you've had other cancers of the head or neck. It's also higher if you don't include fruits and vegetables in your diet.

Symptoms

Oral cancer often starts as a red or white patch in your mouth. You may have a sore that bleeds easily and doesn't heal. You may feel a lump in your cheek or your neck. Your throat may be sore, or you may feel like there's something stuck in it. You may have trouble chewing or swallowing. You may have trouble moving your tongue or your jaw. Your teeth may become loose. You may develop an earache.

Treatment

Treatment depends on your needs. You may benefit from surgery, radiation therapy or some other option. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.

