

# Oral Cancer

Oral cancer kills more people nationwide than either cervical or skin (melanoma) cancer, and only half of patients diagnosed will survive more than five years. One American dies every hour from oral cancer. The most common risk factors are tobacco use, frequent high-quantity alcohol consumption, constant sunlight exposure, habitual cheek or lip biting, or poorly fitting dentures. Although 70 to 75 percent of oral cancers are found in people who use tobacco and/or drink alcohol excessively, 25 percent of oral cancers occur in people who have no risk factors at all.

Dr. Arima could very well be your number one soldier in the fight against oral cancer. Statistics show that in about 10 percent of patients, dentists notice a problem area even before the patient notices. During a regular dental check up, Dr. Arima will examine your entire mouth, searching for a flat, painless, white or red spot or small sore. Other signs of oral cancer can include:

- A sore that bleeds easily or does not heal.
- A color change of the oral tissues.
- A lump, thickening, rough spot, crust, or small, eroded area.
- Pain, tenderness, or numbness anywhere in the mouth or on the lips.

Two tests can determine if a trouble spot is cancerous. A brush biopsy is a painless test performed on areas that look harmless or do not have a clear cause. This test can detect potentially

dangerous cells in the early stages of the disease. A scalpel biopsy, which requires local anesthesia, is usually performed on suspicious areas.

Remember to schedule regular checkups for everyone in your family. Two visits per year are recommended for general care. If, between visits, you notice any unusual changes in your mouth, call your dentist immediately. Together, you and Dr. Arima can fight and win the battle against oral cancer.

For more information about oral cancer, support groups, or treatments, visit [Oral Cancer Foundation](#).