



Reduce Your Risk of Oral & Oropharyngeal Cancer

A Guide to Self-Examination

Oral and oropharyngeal (back of mouth) cancer is often not noticed in its early stages because it can develop without pain or symptoms. If the cancer is detected early, and before it has spread to other tissues, the 5-year survival rate is almost 90%. That's why professional oral cancer screenings coupled with regular at-home oral self-examinations are so important. We all have a role to play in protecting our overall health!

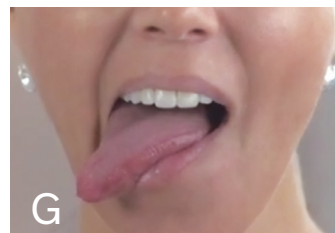
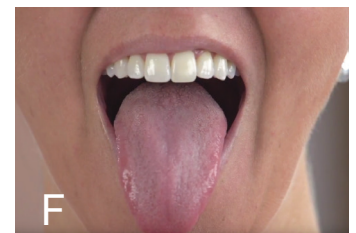
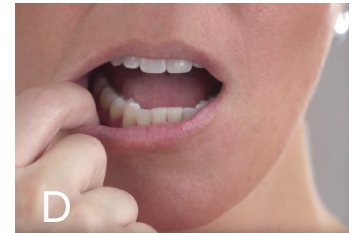
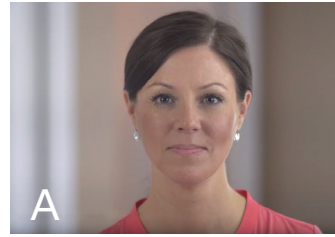
10 STEPS TO REDUCE YOUR RISK

1. Stop using vaping and tobacco products
2. Follow Canada's updated guidelines for safe alcohol consumption¹
3. Avoid consuming alcohol while using tobacco products
4. Consider getting the HPV vaccination for young boys and girls, ideally before they become sexually active
5. Talk to your health care provider to see if HPV vaccination is right for you
6. Practice safe sex and limit your number of sexual partners to reduce the risk of HPV infection
7. Eat a well-balanced diet
8. Avoid unprotected exposure to the sun
9. Schedule regular dental hygiene appointments that include head and neck examinations and oral cancer screenings
10. Perform regular oral self-examinations between dental hygiene appointments



ORAL-EXAMINATION IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK!²

- A. Wash your hands. Stand in front of a mirror and examine your face and neck. Examine the skin on your face and along your hairline for moles, growths, sores or any change in colour or size of an existing mole.
- B. Next, using your fingertips, check for growths or changes in skin texture, swelling or lumps that occur only on one side of your face or neck. Then, check under your jawbone from ear to chin, down the muscle that runs each side of your neck, and inside your collarbone.
- C. Remove any oral appliances or dentures and examine the inside of your mouth. Lift your upper lip, examining the gums and inside of the lip for any colour change or sores. Feel along the lip for lumps or changes in the tissue texture. Repeat for the lower lip.
- D. Examine the inside of your cheeks for red or white patches. Check for texture changes, swelling, hardness or tenderness.
- E. The tongue is a high-risk area for oral cancer. First, lift your tongue so that it touches the roof of your mouth. Examine the floor of your mouth and the underside of your tongue. Feel for swelling or hardness and look for colour or texture changes.
- F. Next, stick your tongue straight out as far as it will go. Examine the surface as far back as you can see for swelling, hardness or colour changes. This is best accomplished by compressing your fingertips on top of the tongue with your thumb underneath the tongue.
- G. Move your tongue to the right and left. It should move freely and evenly from side to side. Note any limitation in movement. Feel each side of the tongue for lumps or hard spots and look for any colour or texture changes.
- H. Open your mouth as wide as possible to see any colour or texture change on the roof of your mouth. Check the surface for lumps or swelling. With your mouth still open, take a deep breath in and say "aah". Examine your throat for signs of texture or colour change. This area may appear quite red simply due to allergies or even mouth breathing. Pay attention to persistent or recurring throat infections.



For more information, visit [checkyourmouth.org](https://www.checkyourmouth.org)



References

1. Paradis C, Butt P, Shield K, Poole N, Wells S, Naimi T, Sherk A, and the Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines Scientific Expert Panels. *Canada's guidance on alcohol and health: final report*. Ottawa (ON): Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction; 2023.
2. The Oral Cancer Foundation. Check Your Mouth™ Self-Discovery Exam [Internet]. ©2022. Available from: www.checkyourmouth.org

If you do find something that does not appear normal, does not have a known cause, and does not heal or go away in 14 days, visit your dental hygienist for an oral cancer examination.



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