

ORAL CANCER



How **WIDESPREAD** is oral cancer?

- 30,000 Americans are diagnosed with oral cancer each year.
- Approximately 8,000 deaths each year are attributed to oral cancer. Connecticut's incidence, five-year survival, and mortality rates are virtually the same as the national average.

What can I do to **REDUCE THE RISK**?

- **STOP USING** chewing tobacco, cigarettes, pipes, cigars.
- Visit your dentist/dental hygienist regularly - they spot early signs.
- Limit exposure to the sun - protect your lips from overexposure too!

What difference does **EARLY DETECTION** make?

- Chance of surviving five years after early diagnosis = 76%
- Chance of surviving five years after spreading to other areas = 19%

What **SIGNS & SYMPTOMS** should I be concerned about?

- A persistent sore or irritation that doesn't heal.
- Color changes: red or white lesions.
- Pain, tenderness or numbness in the mouth or lips.
- A lump, thickening, a rough spot, crust or small eroded area.
- Hard time chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the tongue & jaw.
- Change in bite.

WHAT SHOULD I DO if I see/detect something?

- Contact your dentist immediately.

COMMON ORAL HEALTH CONCERNS



TOOTH DECAY

Tooth decay is a common INFECTIOUS disease. Streptococcus Mutans are the bacteria that cause tooth decay. This bacterium is usually transmitted by mouth through saliva by sharing eating utensils, sharing food or drink, and kissing. Once these bacteria come in contact with certain carbohydrates (sugars) they absorb them and produce acid. This acid breaks down the enamel on teeth, starting the process of tooth decay.

ORAL CANCER

Approximately 30,000 Americans are diagnosed with oral cancer each year. More people die of oral cancer than of cervical cancer, malignant melanoma, or Hodgkin's Disease. The chance of being alive 5 years after oral cancer is diagnosed is lower than for most other cancers.

ORAL AND FACIAL INJURIES

Accidental injury is the leading cause of death for children and adolescents. Since sports and playground related injuries commonly affect the head, neck and mouth, prevention of these types of injuries is a major oral health concern. Each year nearly 35% of these injuries are severe and, for children ages 0-4, 60% involve face and head injuries. In one year, the total cost for playground related injuries for children under age 15 years was 1.2 billion dollars.

ORAL HEALTH AND AGING

There are often special concerns related to the oral health care of seniors. Many seniors cannot afford dental care. The ability to brush and floss is often difficult for seniors because of physical limitations. Getting to dental appointments can be a problem for seniors who lack access to transportation. Medical issues may overshadow oral health care. Multiple health concerns, the burden of taking many medications, and the demands of appointments with different medical specialists might cause some seniors to neglect oral health care visits and daily care of the teeth.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS

Approximately 8,000 babies are born each year with cleft lip or cleft palate. It is one of the most common birth defects in the United States. Children born with these oral birth defects face many problems, including difficulties with speech and with eating. Extensive surgery is often required to correct or minimize these conditions. Cleft lip and cleft palate also affect appearance. This may lead to psychosocial problems and low self-esteem.



State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, Oral Health Unit
410 Capitol Avenue MS#11DNT, Hartford, CT 06134
(860) 509-7809

PREVENTING ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS



GOOD SELF CARE

A program of daily brushing and flossing helps prevent oral health problems. The teeth should be brushed using a soft bristle brush at least twice a day. Flossing between the teeth is just as important and should be done at least once per day. It is important not to forget the back teeth and other difficult places to reach when brushing and flossing.

FLUORIDE

Fluoride is a mineral that strengthens the outside of teeth. Strong teeth resist decay. Tooth decay can be reduced by 50 - 70 percent with ingestion of proper amounts of fluoride. Many community water supply systems (in Connecticut close to 90 percent) add fluoride to their water.

Well water, bottled water, and filtered water usually do not contain the right amounts of fluoride to help strengthen teeth. Some local water supplies are not fluoridated. If your water source is not fluoridated, speak with a dental professional to arrange for other ways to provide fluoride.

SEALANTS

The top surfaces of the back teeth have deep pits and fissures. These are difficult to keep clean and are vulnerable to decay. One way to help prevent decay on these surfaces is with sealants. Sealants are safe coatings that help prevent decay. They are easy to apply and are placed on permanent molars after age 7. Talk to your dentist or dental hygienist about sealants.

FIRST YEAR = FIRST VISIT

Building a foundation for good oral health must start early. During these early visits, the dentist and dental hygienist will assess proper tooth development and check for other problems. By starting early, caregivers can learn steps to ensure good oral hygiene for their children. Through example, children will learn the importance of oral health care and will see that the oral health visit is a very positive experience.

GOOD NUTRITION AND EATING HABITS

Teeth, like bones, benefit from a diet with the right amount of calcium. Eating high amounts of sweets and regularly snacking between meals promotes tooth decay. Having a balanced diet improves overall good health. Oral health is no exception to this rule.

To prevent tooth decay, babies should never be put to bed with a bottle and should not be allowed to drink beverages containing sugars (even milk) all day long. Children should use a cup rather than a bottle as soon as they are able to sit up alone.



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ORAL DISEASE IS NO SMILING MATTER



ORAL DISEASES & CONDITIONS ARE SERIOUS

- Dental decay is the most common chronic disease of childhood, 5-times more common than asthma.
- Cleft lip / cleft palate is the 4th most common birth defect.
- Oral cancers are associated with one of the lowest 5-year survival rates of all cancers.
- Injuries to structures in and around the mouth are among the most common of all injuries in children and adolescents.

ORAL HEALTH IMPACTS OVERALL HEALTH

- Tooth decay and gum and bone disease of the mouth (“periodontitis”) are infectious diseases. They progressively become more serious and difficult to treat. When left untreated even for a short period of time they begin to negatively affect the entire body.
- Oral bacteria can cause or seriously worsen infections throughout the body, particularly in individuals with weakened immune systems.
- Dental decay, and gum and bone disease of the mouth have been linked to:
 - Low birth weight
 - Cardiovascular conditions
 - Cancer
 - Diabetes
 - Poor nutrition
 - Speech impairments
 - Psychosocial problems.

ORAL HEALTH REFLECTS OVERALL HEALTH

- Ulcerations and other lesions in the mouth are associated with and may be the first signs of:
 - Diabetes
 - HIV Infection
 - Kidney Disease
 - Several different cancers
 - Measles, Chicken Pox
 - Many Other Medical Problems.