

# The Changing Face of Oral Cancer

Oral cancer is on the rise—and heavy drinkers and tobacco users aren't the only ones at high risk.

New research indicates that an increasing number of young people are developing oral cancer related to human papillomavirus (HPV). Although oral cancer is most common in people over age 50, the fastest growing segment of newly diagnosed cases is nonsmoking young adults. Studies show that HPV may have surpassed smoking and alcohol use to become the primary cause of head and neck cancers in the U.S. In fact, 72 percent of all oral cancers are HPV-related.<sup>1</sup>

No matter what the cause, oral cancer can be deadly. It claims the life of roughly one person every hour.<sup>2</sup> If not diagnosed and treated in its early stages, oral cancer can spread, leading to chronic pain, loss of function, facial and oral disfigurement, and death. Only 64 percent of those diagnosed will survive in the next five years.<sup>3</sup> After treatment, 52 percent of oral cancer survivors do not return to work due to severe facial disfiguration.<sup>4</sup> The earlier oral cancer is detected and treated, the lower the treatment costs and the better the survival rate—which is just one of the many reasons you should visit your dentist regularly.

## Did you know?

Between 80 and 90 percent of oral cancer patients will survive if the diagnosis is found in its early stages.<sup>5</sup>



# Quick Bites

## Watch for early warning signs

Contact your dentist immediately if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Mouth sores that last longer than two weeks
- Swelling, growths or lumps anywhere in or near your mouth or neck
- White or red patches in your mouth or on your lips
- Repeated bleeding from the mouth or throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Persistent hoarseness

Help increase your chances of early detection and treatment by making regular visits to your dentist and discussing your risk factors.



Visit us online at [DeltaDentalNM.com](https://www.DeltaDentalNM.com)  
for more information on oral and  
overall health!

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "How Many Cancers Are Linked with HPV Each Year?," web. 2. The Oral Cancer Foundation, "Oral Cancer Facts," web. 3. National Cancer Institute, "SEER Stat Fact Sheets: Oral Cavity and Pharynx Cancer," web. 4. Jacobson et al, "The Cost Burden of Oral, Oral Pharyngeal, and Salivary Gland Cancers in Three Groups: Commercial Insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid," Head and Neck Oncology 4, no. 1 (2012): 15. 5. Oral Cancer Awareness Foundation, "Early Detection," web.

**Serving New Mexico Since 1971**

Delta Dental of New Mexico