



# Avoiding Oral Cancer

According to the American Cancer Society, more than one-third of women and nearly one-half of men in the United States will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime. **This group includes the over 39,000 Americans diagnosed with oral cancer each year.<sup>1</sup>** When detected in the early stages, oral cancer is one of the more treatable cancers.

## Why Early Detection Matters



Less than half of oral cancer patients will fully recover, and those who do often experience facial disfigurement or other life-altering complications. Even though the five-year survival rate has steadily improved since 1975<sup>2</sup>, more than 7,500 Americans die from oral cancer each year<sup>1</sup>. Early diagnosis of oral cancer is the answer – if caught early, the five-year survival rate jumps to 80-90 percent.<sup>3</sup>

## What You Should Know



Oral cancer can affect any part of your mouth, including gums, cheeks, tongue and lips. Though oral cancer can be difficult to detect in the early stages, symptoms to be aware of include small red or white spots, and mouth sores that don't heal.

People who use tobacco products or consume excessive amounts of alcohol tend to have a higher risk for oral cancer, and those who use tobacco products *and* consume alcohol in excess have the highest risk. But 25 percent of oral cancer patients have no known risk factors. In fact, the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population being diagnosed are non-smokers under the age of 50.

## What You Can Do



Most people visit their dentist more frequently than their physician. During a routine visit, dental professionals are able to detect many diseases early, including oral cancer. In addition to doing a thorough examination, your dentist can use a quick and painless diagnostic tool called a brush biopsy to test any unexplained red or white spots in your mouth. This tool can identify and analyze both precancerous and cancerous cells. Other types of biopsies may also be completed by the dentist, if needed.

**Remember, both prevention and early detection are key components to keeping oral cancer at bay – and maybe even saving a life!**

<sup>1</sup> American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures 2015. <sup>2</sup> National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research 2014. <sup>3</sup> American Cancer Society, Surveillance Research 2014.