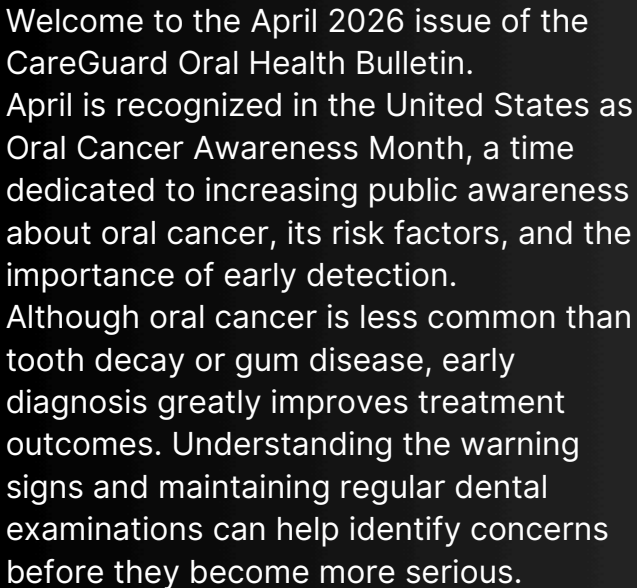


**ORAL CANCER
AWARENESS
MONTH
EARLY DETECTION
CAN SAVE LIVES**



Oral cancer is a disease in which abnormal cells develop in the mouth or surrounding tissues.
It may affect:

- Like many health conditions, oral cancer is easier to treat when detected early. Regular dental examinations often include a visual screening for signs of oral cancer.

Many oral changes are harmless, but some should be evaluated by a healthcare professional if they do not heal within two weeks.

Possible warning signs include:

- A sore that does not heal
- Persistent mouth pain
- Red or white patches inside the mouth
- A lump or thickened area
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Persistent hoarseness
- Numbness of the lips or tongue
- Early evaluation is important whenever symptoms persist.

UNDERSTANDING RISK FACTORS

Several factors may increase the risk of developing oral cancer. These include:

- Tobacco use
- Heavy alcohol consumption
- Certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Excessive sun exposure to the lips
- Increasing age
- A previous history of oral cancer

Reducing risk factors and attending regular preventive dental visits can support long-term oral health.



PREVENTION TIPS

While not every case can be prevented, healthy lifestyle choices may help lower risk.

- ✓ Avoid tobacco products.
- ✓ Limit alcohol consumption.
- ✓ Protect your lips from excessive sun exposure by using lip balm with SPF.
- ✓ Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Visit a dental professional regularly for preventive examinations.
- ✓ Pay attention to changes in your mouth and seek evaluation if something does not heal.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Many cases of oral cancer are discovered during routine dental examinations.
- Early-stage oral cancer may not cause pain.
- Regular self-awareness and professional screenings improve the chances of early detection.
- Prevention and education remain essential components of public health.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH

"If my mouth doesn't hurt, everything is fine."

FACT

Some oral cancers develop without pain in their early stages. Regular examinations are important even when you feel healthy.

MONTHLY SELF-CHECK

Take a few minutes once each month to become familiar with your mouth. Look for:

- Persistent sores
- Unusual lumps
- Red or white patches
- Changes that do not heal

If you notice anything unusual lasting more than two weeks, contact a healthcare professional for evaluation.

Self-awareness is not a substitute for professional care but can help you recognize changes earlier.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Preventive screenings and oral health education may be available through:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)
- Community Health Centers
- Dental school clinics
- Local public health departments
- Community dental programs

Access to preventive care helps improve early detection and supports healthier communities.



THIS MONTH'S HEALTHY SMILE CHALLENGE

THIS APRIL, COMMIT TO PROTECTING YOUR ORAL HEALTH

- ☐ **SCHEDULE A PREVENTIVE DENTAL EXAMINATION IF YOU HAVE NOT HAD ONE RECENTLY** **TWICE DAILY**
- ☐ **PERFORM A MONTHLY SELF-CHECK OF YOUR MOUTH**
- ☐ **AVOID TOBACCO PRODUCTS**
- ☐ **EAT ONE TOOTH-FRIENDLY SNACK EACH DAY**
- ☐ **SHARE ONE ORAL HEALTH TIP WITH A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER**

Small actions practiced consistently can lead to healthier smiles for a lifetime.

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