

MOUTH CANCER ACTION MONTH



November is Mouth Cancer Action Month

Raising awareness. Early Detection Saves Lives.

Every November, dental teams across the UK unite to highlight **Mouth Cancer Action Month** — a campaign dedicated to shining a spotlight on one of the most overlooked yet life-threatening conditions: mouth cancer. Led by the Oral Health Foundation and supported by the Mouth Cancer Foundation, this initiative aims to educate the public, encourage early detection, and ultimately save lives.

Oral cancer can affect anyone, yet many people remain unaware of its signs, risks, and the vital role of regular dental visits in spotting it early. The good news is when diagnosed early, survival rates exceed 90%, but late stage detection reduces this figure to around 50%. . That's why raising awareness with patients attending regular dental check-ups is so important.

The reality we face

- 1 person every **3 HOURS** is lost to oral cancer
- **10,825** people in the UK were diagnosed with oral cancer last year.
- **3,637** lives were lost—this is more than cervical and testicular cancer combined.
- Incidence has **risen by 133%** over the past 20 years.
- **53%** of cases appear on the **tongue and tonsils**.
- **More than half** are diagnosed at **Stage IV**, when treatment is most difficult.
- **Men** are **TWICE** as likely to be affected, and **78%** of cases occur in those over 55.

Why the visit to your dental practice matters

Early detection saves lives. Catching mouth cancer at its earliest stage dramatically improves treatment success and reduces the need for invasive procedures. Unfortunately, awareness remains low—only 20% of adults can identify major symptoms, and more than half of cases are diagnosed late.

Dental professionals play a critical role in bridging this gap. Routine oral examinations can identify suspicious lesions before they progress, making every check-up an opportunity for prevention..

Patients do not realise dentists and their teams are often the **first healthcare professionals to detect mouth cancer**, sometimes before symptoms cause pain or discomfort. Detecting mouth cancer early can increase survival rates from **around 50% to over 90%**.

Recognising the Signs

Early symptoms are often subtle and mistaken for minor oral issues. Key warning signs include:

- Ulcers that do not heal within three weeks
- Persistent lumps or swellings in the mouth or neck
- Red or white patches inside the mouth
- Unexplained bleeding, numbness, or pain
- Voice changes, persistent hoarseness or sore throat
- Pain, numbness or difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Any changes in your mouth that don't feel right

Have a poster in your reception or any other way you communicate with patients to promote and educate them to recognise any of these symptoms and to seek professional advice immediately. Regular dental check-ups remain one of the most effective ways to catch mouth cancer early.



Scan the QR
Code OR
Click on the
video on the
right to learn
how to do a
45 second
check



Common Risk Factors

Certain habits and health factors increase the likelihood of developing mouth cancer. Understanding and reducing these risks can make a huge difference to protect patients and their loved ones:

- **Tobacco use** — whether smoked (cigarettes, cigars, pipes) or chewed, is the leading cause of mouth cancer.
- **Alcohol consumption** — drinking heavily, especially in combination with smoking, multiplies the risk.
- **Chewing betel quid, paan, or areca (betel) nut** — commonly used in some Asian and Middle Eastern communities — significantly raises the risk of developing oral cancer.
- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** — a common virus that can be spread through skin or intimate contact, is now linked to a growing number of mouth and throat cancers, particularly among younger people.
- **Poor diet** — a lack of fresh fruits and vegetables can reduce the body's natural defences.
- **Excessive sun exposure** — can increase the risk of lip cancer.

Despite growing awareness, only 20% of UK adults know the major signs and symptoms and less than 10% understand the key risk factors.

Getting patients to make small, positive lifestyle changes — stopping tobacco use, moderating alcohol, and eating a balanced diet — can dramatically reduce their risk.

Together we can make a difference

Mouth Cancer Action Month is not just about statistics — it's about people, families, and communities. It's about **having conversations**, **reducing stigma**, and **empowering everyone** to take their oral health seriously.

Blue Wednesday – 12th November 2025



We would like to encourage as many people as possible to check their mouth for the early warnings signs of cancer and you can take part in Blue Wednesday by sharing information of how to do a self-check at home. Help spread awareness by dressing up in blue on Blue Wednesday.

So this November, get patients take a moment to **look inside their mouth more routinely**. Get patients to scan the QR code above and do a 45 second check regularly between visits to your dental practice that may save a life.

If you require more information please visit:

[Mouth And Oropharyngeal Cancer | Cancer Research UK](#)

[Oral Health Foundation - Mouth Cancer Action Month](#)

[Macmillan Cancer Support - Mouth Cancer Awareness Month](#)