HOW IS MOUTH, HEAD AND NECK CANCER DIAGNOSED?

Your dentist or doctor will refer you to a specialist for further tests. These tests can include:

- A physical examination
- X-rays
- A biopsy - a small piece of tissue may be sent for further examination.

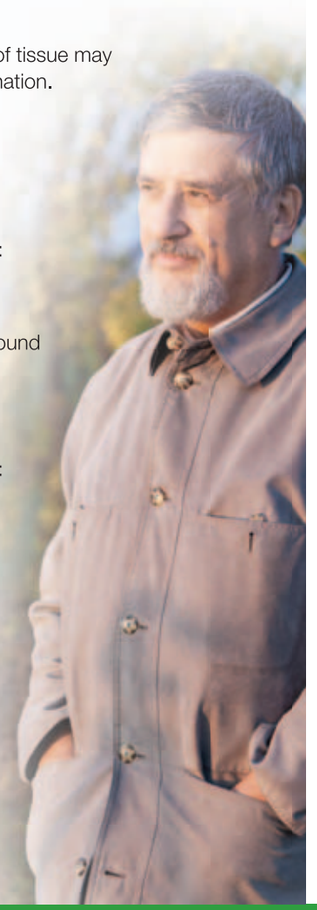
HOW IS IT TREATED?

Your specialist will plan your treatment depending on a number of factors, including:

- The location and type of cancer found
- How early the cancer is found
- Your general health.

Treatments may include one or more of the following:

- Surgery – removal of part or all of the affected area
- Radiotherapy – the use of high energy X-rays to kill cancer cells
- Chemotherapy – the use of drugs that kill cancer cells.



THE EUROPEAN CODE AGAINST CANCER

The European Code Against Cancer outlines healthier lifestyle choices that can help you avoid certain cancers and improve your general health. These include:

- If you smoke, plan to quit
- Eat at least five servings a day of a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Limit your intake of fatty foods
- If you drink alcohol, limit your intake to no more than:
  - Two standard drinks a day for men
  - One standard drink a day for women
- Do brisk physical activity every day
- Be a healthy weight
- Protect yourself from the sun and avoid sunburn, especially in children
- See a doctor if you notice a lump, a sore that does not heal, a mole that changes in shape, size or colour, or bleeds in unusual circumstances
- See a doctor if you have persistent problems, such as an ongoing cough or hoarseness, a change in bowel or bladder habit, or unexpected weight loss.

What you should know

what you should know

FURTHER INFORMATION

Anyone who is concerned about mouth, head and neck cancer or cancer in general can speak with a specialist nurse in confidence by calling the National Cancer Helpline on **Freefone 1800 200 700**. The Helpline is open Monday-Thursday 9am-7pm, Fridays 9am-5pm.

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS:

Irish Cancer Society	
www.cancer.ie	1800 200 700
National Smokers' Quitline	
www.quit.ie	1800 201 203
Dental Health Foundation	
www.dentalhealth.ie	01 662 9123
Dublin Dental School & Hospital	
www.dentalhospital.ie	01 612 7200
Cork University Dental School & Hospital	
www.ucc.ie/en/dentalschool	021 4901100
Irish Dental Association	
www.dentist.ie	01 295 0072
Mouth Cancer Foundation	
www.mouthcancerfoundation.org	+44 (0) 1924 950 950

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Mouth Head & Neck Cancer Ireland
Dental Health Foundation Ireland
Dublin Dental School & Hospital
Cork University Dental School & Hospital
Irish Cancer Society

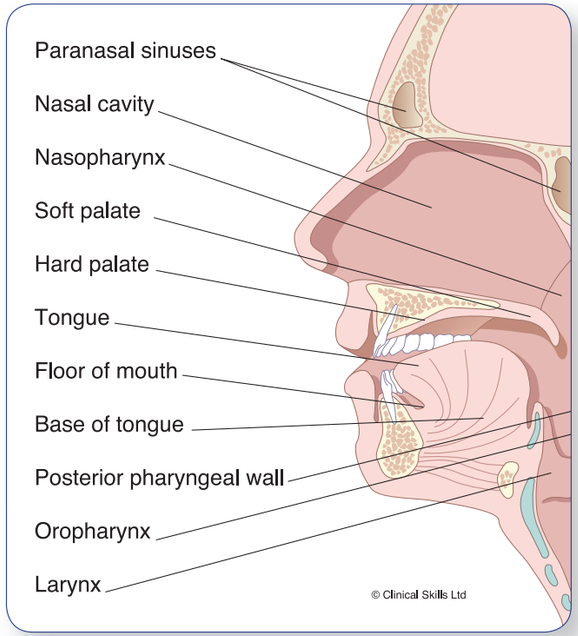
Irish Cancer Society

Mouth, Head and Neck Cancer

what you should know

SOME FACTS ABOUT MOUTH, HEAD AND NECK CANCER:

- Over 400 cases are diagnosed every year in Ireland
- It is the sixth most common cancer in men worldwide
- While it mainly affects men, more women are being diagnosed in recent years
- It mainly affects older people, but younger people are now being diagnosed
- When diagnosed early, your chance of survival is greatly improved.



Mouth, head and neck cancer can affect your lips, gums, cheeks, tongue, palate, tonsil, throat (oropharynx), salivary glands, sinuses, nose and voice box (larynx).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The symptoms of mouth, head and neck cancer can include:

- A sore or ulcer in your mouth that does not heal
- White or red patches inside the mouth
- A lump in the mouth or neck
- Thickening or hardening of the cheek or tongue
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing or moving the tongue
- Numbness of the tongue or face
- A persistent sore throat and hoarseness
- Persistent nosebleeds and a stuffy nose
- Unexplained loose teeth.

Remember, these symptoms can also be due to complaints other than cancer. However if you have any of these symptoms, for more than three weeks, it is important that you have them checked by your dentist or doctor.

When in doubt, get it checked out

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

The cause of mouth, head and neck cancer is not always known but your risk is greater if you:

- Smoke cigarettes, cigars, pipes or marijuana
- Chew smokeless tobacco, paan, gutkha and quid
- Drink alcohol and products containing alcohol
- Are exposed to the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). HPV has been linked to cancer in the tonsil and throat area
- Are overexposed to the sun. This increases your risk of lip cancer.

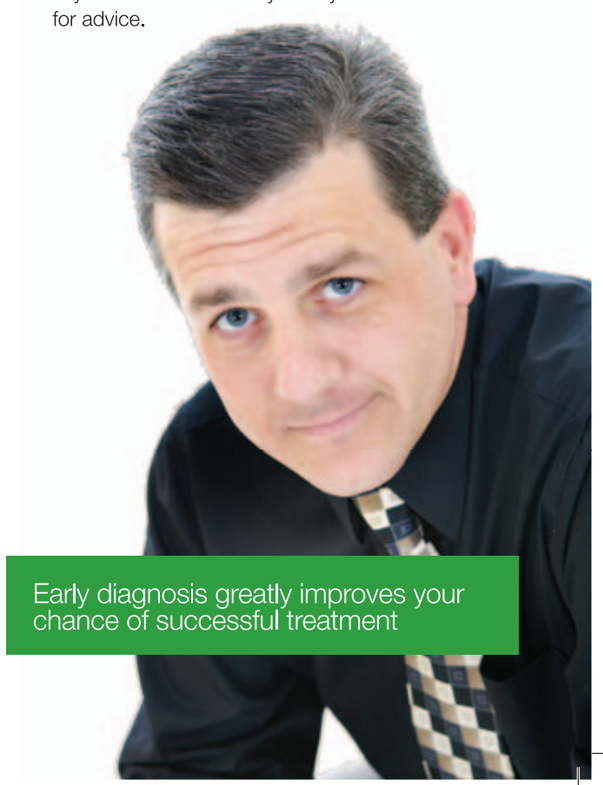
Smoking or drinking alcohol are the most important risk factors. However, your risk of mouth, head and neck cancer is even greater if you smoke and drink

HOW CAN I REDUCE MY RISK?

- Do not smoke. If you do smoke, plan to quit
- Limit your intake of alcohol
- Use a lip balm that contains sun block
- Eat a healthy diet high in fruit and vegetables
- Check your mouth regularly for changes, for example, when brushing your teeth
- Visit your dentist regularly, even if you have no teeth and wear dentures.

WHERE CAN I BE CHECKED?

- If you notice changes in your mouth, throat or neck, visit your dentist or doctor straight away
- A dental hygienist may also notice changes in your mouth and refer you to your dentist for advice.



Early diagnosis greatly improves your chance of successful treatment