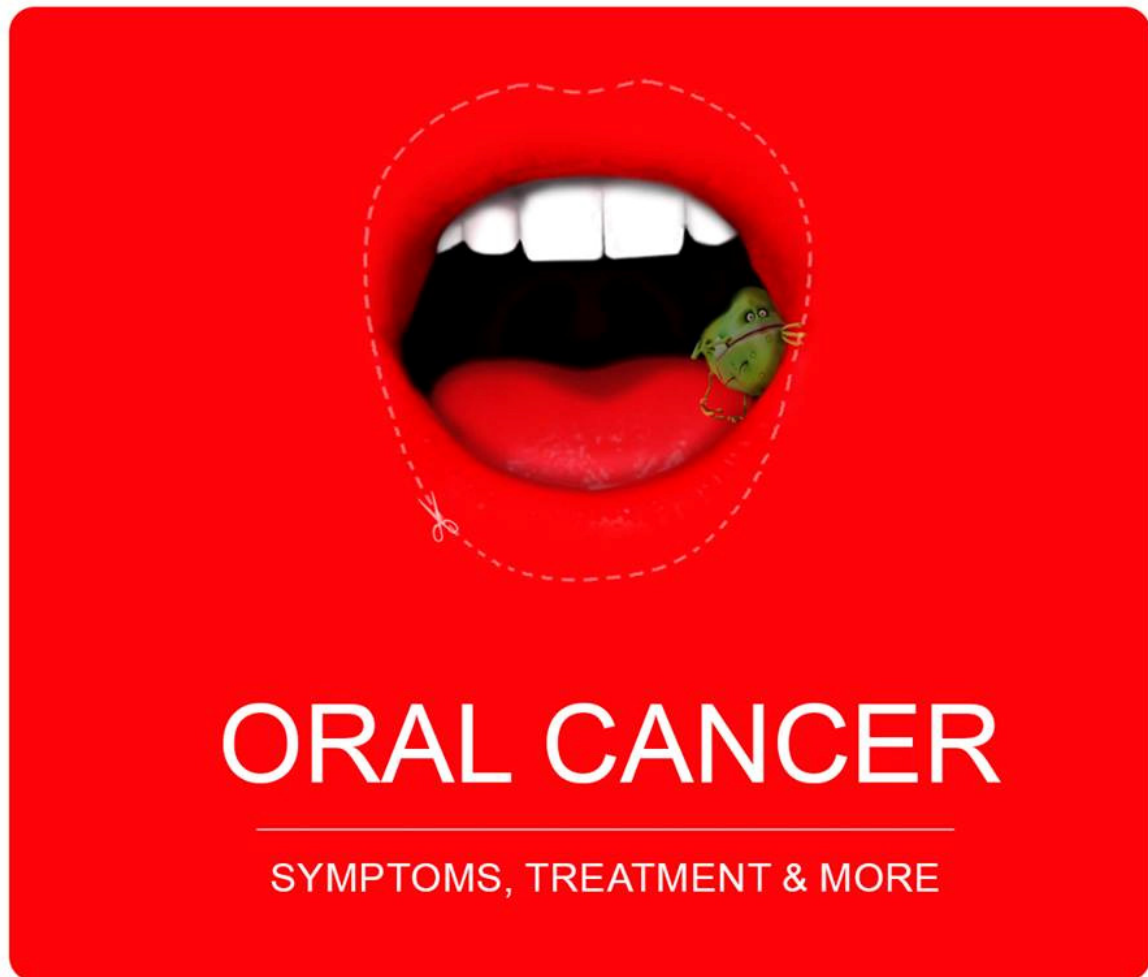


## Oral Cancer : Symptoms, Treatment & More



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Chewing tobacco and snuff can cause cancer in the cheek, gums, and lips. Like a pipe, cancer often occurs where the tobacco is held in the mouth. Cancer caused by "smokeless" tobacco often begins as leukoplakia (a condition characterized by a whitish patch that develops inside the mouth or throat) or erythroplakia (a condition characterized by a red, raised patch that develops inside the mouth).

## Symptoms of oral cancer

The most common preliminary symptom is leukoplakia.

Other symptoms include:

- A sore on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal
- A lump on the lip or in the mouth or throat
- A white or red patch on the gums, tongue, or lining of the mouth
- Unusual bleeding, pain, or numbness in the mouth
- A sore throat that does not go away, or a feeling that something is caught in the throat
- Difficulty or pain with chewing or swallowing
- Swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- A change in the voice
- Pain in the ear

## Treatment

Treatment for oral cancer depends on a number of factors, including the location, size, type, and extent of the tumour, as well as the stage of the disease. Treatment can include surgery (to remove parts of the mouth, jaw, and, if the cancer has spread, the lymph nodes in the neck), radiation therapy, or a combination of the two. Some patients also receive chemotherapy.

## What one needs to do

The best thing to do, of course, is quit. People who stop using tobacco -- even after many years of use -- can greatly reduce their risk of oral cancer.

According to the New York University College of Dentistry, survival rates can

reach as high as 81 percent with early detection, compared to a survival rate of 17 percent or less if the cancer is detected late.

If quitting isn't a possibility, at least make sure your doctor and/or dentist examine you regularly for leukoplakia, the precancerous sores. Remember, if oral cancer is detected early, it can often be treated successfully.