

## Oral Cancer

- ◆ A type of cancer that occurs anywhere in or around the mouth including the tongue, throat or lips.
- ◆ Most oral cancers occur after age 40.

### 6 steps to an Oral Cancer Exam

*Your dental or medical provider will:*

1. Ask you to remove your dentures if present.
2. Check and feel your face, neck, ears and lips to look for any lumps. Feel under your chin and on both sides of your neck.
3. Look and feel the inside of your lips and cheeks for red or white spots.
4. Ask you to stick out your tongue and look for red or white spots on your tongue with a piece of gauze to see the sides and under your tongue.
5. Check the roof of your mouth, the back of your throat and the floor of your mouth.
6. Put a finger under your tongue and the other finger under your chin and press down to check for lumps.



## Checklist

- ◆ Tell your dentist what medical conditions you have and what medicines you take.
- ◆ If you take blood thinning medications, speak with your dentist and physician before your appointment.
- ◆ Other conditions may require that you take an antibiotic before you undergo a dental procedure.
- ◆ Continue to use fluoride toothpaste and drink fluoridated water to protect your oral health.

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# Oral Health for Seniors

A helpful overview to common questions seniors may have about their oral healthcare.



**Martin O'Malley, Governor**

**Anthony G. Brown, Lieutenant Governor**

**Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary**

## Caring for Dentures

Germs stick to your teeth, and also to full or partial dentures.

- ◆ Clean dentures daily with a commercial cleaner.
- ◆ Do not use toothpaste or household cleaners on dentures.
- ◆ Take your dentures out for at least four hours a day.
- ◆ Brush and floss your remaining natural teeth daily.
- ◆ Brush your gums, tongue and palate with a soft-bristled tooth brush twice a day.

## Brushing with Arthritis

Sometimes even brushing and flossing can be difficult due to arthritis or other conditions.

- ◆ Look for toothbrushes with large handles or attach the toothbrush to a larger object such as a ball.
- ◆ Purchase an electric toothbrush which does the work for you.
- ◆ Have someone bend the toothbrush handle to make it more comfortable to hold.
- ◆ Use a floss holder to help guide the floss in between the teeth.

## Coping with Dry Mouth

Chronic dry mouth is a side effect in hundreds of medications.

- ◆ Talk to your dentist or doctor if you have persistent dry mouth.
- ◆ Drink plenty of water.
- ◆ Suck on sugar-free hard candy or chew sugar-free gum.
- ◆ Use over-the-counter oral moisturizers, such as sprays or mouthwash.
- ◆ Avoid dry-mouth irritants such as caffeinated drinks, alcohol, or acidic fruit juices.
- ◆ Use a humidifier in your home to help keep moisture in the air.